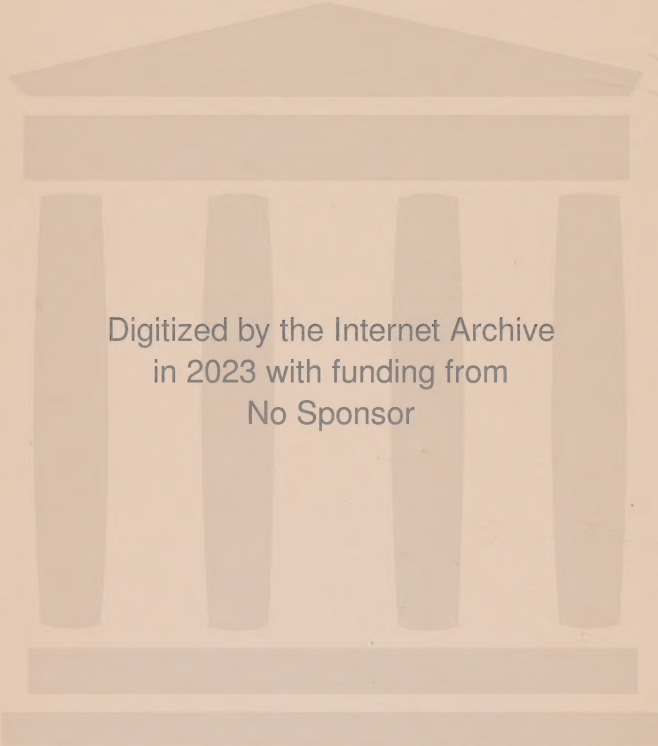


The
William Edward Reis
Library



Allegheny College

WITHDRAWN



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
No Sponsor

LYRIC PIONEERS OF
MODERN GERMANY

LYRIC PIONEERS OF MODERN GERMANY

Studies in German Social Poetry

SOLOMON LIPTZIN, PH.D.

College of the City of New York



NEW YORK
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS
1928

Copyright, 1928
By COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS

Printed from type. Published January, 1928

Printed in the United States of America

ALLEGHENY COLLEGE
LIBRARY

TO
CAMILLO VON KLENZE
FRIEND AND INSPIRER

36717

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE RISE OF THE GERMAN SOCIAL LYRIC	1
II. THE POET OF THE MIDDLE CLASS	16
III. WELTSCHMERZ AND THE SOCIAL LYRIC	34
IV. THE LYRIC OF SOCIAL PITY	50
V. THE LYRIC OF VICE AND CRIME	64
VI. THE LYRIC OF SOCIAL UTOPIAS	76
VII. THE CLIMAX OF THE EARLY SOCIAL LYRIC	96
VIII. THE LYRIC OF SOCIAL REVOLT	123
IX. THE LYRIC OF SOCIAL CYNICISM	146
NOTES	161
INDEX	183

LYRIC PIONEERS OF MODERN GERMANY

CHAPTER I

THE RISE OF THE GERMAN SOCIAL LYRIC

LITERATURE has often been called the seismograph of life. In no century is this truer than in the nineteenth. For, while in former periods the reading public was limited to a small group of the nobility and of the upper middle class, in this period it embraced hundreds of thousands of men and women from all social ranks. The development and spread of newspapers made it possible for the worker and the shopkeeper, as well as for the nobleman and the official, to keep abreast of the latest currents in politics and economics, in poetry, fiction, and drama. As a result writers, faced by a new audience, were forced to present new themes gleaned from the every-day activities of the readers and new problems that were of more vital interest to the mass.

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

Whereas the German Romantic poets at the beginning of the century, appealing to a select public, were still able to maintain their aristocratic aloofness from the world of practical affairs, their successors in the following generation were called upon to interpret this world that had hitherto been regarded as prosaic and uninspiring.

The literary age ushered in by the riots of 1830 and meeting its end with the collapse of the Revolution of 1848 is an age of transition, differing sharply from ages preceding and those following. It does not, as did the Romantic Movement, seek to escape to a world of dreams that lack the breath and the smell of earth. Nor does it wholly walk in the footsteps of life, reverently copying life's minutest traces, as does the realistic literature of a later day. The writer of this period rather regards himself as a born leader of men, as the prophet who is to point the way into the future. The poem with a purpose, the drama with a mission, the novel with a thesis flourish. The interest in artistic form is subordinated to an interest in content. Poets are prized not for the beauty of their imagery or the depth of their emotion but for their specific message. For fully a decade after the accession of Frederick William IV to the throne of Prussia in [2]

The Rise of the German Social Lyric

1840—a time when interest in politics reaches its highest pitch—it is the political message, more than any other feature embodied in a poem, that in Germany as well as in France wins for the lyricist popular approval or condemnation. Herwegh and Freiligrath, Dingelstedt and Hoffmann von Fallersleben are the idols of the day. Political poems are broadcast by the thousands in pamphlet form or even in single sheets and devoured by eager readers.

Simultaneously with the increased attention paid to politics there is an awakening of intense interest in social problems. Beginning with the expansion of railroads at the close of the Thirties, the transformation of Germany from an agrarian to an industrial state proceeds at a rapid pace. Thousands of laborers stream annually from the fields to the cities in order to find employment in the newly established factories. In Prussia alone there are, in 1846, about 550,000 wage-earners in more than 78,000 factories. The skilled artisan, in competition with the machine, soon succumbs to want and must give up the uneven struggle against the new inventions. The proud master, deserted by his diligent apprentices and journeymen, must himself become a humble servant of the machine. These tremendous changes are fraught with poignant tragedy.

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

Human beings do not abandon their deep-rooted habits of living, do not leave the homes of their childhood and the graves of their fathers, do not migrate from villages to the slums of cities, unless compelled by bitter need. And in the Forties need *did* reign in many communities. In the huts of the humble, starvation was a more frequent guest than for many a decade preceding or following. Since trade-unions, labor organizations, and coöperative bargaining were then almost unknown, the worker was wholly at the mercy of the employer and was often shamefully exploited.

To the clear-sighted, a new order was revealing itself, filled with cruelty and yet fascinating in its demoniacal beauty. A new social class was making itself audible, now in helpless wails of despair and now in frantic roars of rage. Was the German lyricist prepared for a new task? Could he sing of the changed society with all its squalor and brutality, its glorious hopes and millennial dreams as sweetly or as vigorously as he had sung of love and nature, of God and war? Could he make the grimy face of the machinist and the tear-stained look of the factory girl as poetically attractive as the majestic countenance of the prince or the alluring glance of the heroine born to be admired?

The Rise of the German Social Lyric

The problems that faced the lyricist also faced the writer of fiction, but the latter's prose medium was better adapted to the realistic presentation of new social phenomena and of new characters selected from the environment of industry. As early as 1810 Max Klinger launched an attack upon property and wealth. In his *Antediluvian Travels*, he traced the source of all social evils to the institution of private ownership of land and the means of production. In his opinion Cain was the father of the dominant sinful order, for he first made the distinction between "mine" and "thine," and thereby brought theft, murder, and predatory warfare into the world. It seemed strange to the poet that those who worked most possessed least and lived in the dirtiest and most abominable cellars, while those who never labored had an overabundance of everything and were regarded as beings of nobler blood. It vexed him to see the lazy rich despising, and even mistreating, those who toiled for them. He assumed that the workers must be very good-natured; else how could they be content with the little they earned and not seize for themselves the vast surplus which they created for others? He bitterly satirized the worship of gold as the source of power and of joy in life. Gold that was originally designed as a form of

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

ornament and as a medium of exchange had now usurped the rôle of a God and was exacting incalculable human sacrifices. "Those who have no gold must offer their hands and their backs to those who can make use of these hands and backs in order to acquire this precious metal. If you do not yourself possess gold, you have, like every other domestic animal, a gold value. And if you will work as hard as you can, you will not lack bread and board; for it is to our advantage to spare the animal that is of use to us."

This savage attack upon the social order by one of the leaders of "Storm and Stress" is of importance, for it links this revolutionary movement of the eighteenth century with that of the mid-nineteenth. The heirs of the radical tendencies of "Storm and Stress" were not the Romanticists, but the novelists of Young Germany and the social poets of the Forties. Klinger's critical attitude towards property was echoed by those German writers who, following in the footsteps of Proudhon, declared property to be theft. Lenz lived again in the novel of Georg Büchner, the protagonist of the fourth estate. Schiller's noble robber who dispensed social justice in the Bohemian forests reappeared in the proletarian novels of the Forties as the disguised

[6]

The Rise of the German Social Lyric

aristocrat who saved from ruin the victims of social oppression. A socialistic interpretation of Goethe was attempted in 1846 by Karl Grün, and in an article by Karl Marx in 1847 greater value was placed upon the social rebel who wrote *Prometheus* and *Götz von Berlichingen*, than upon the classical genius who fled from reality in *Iphigenie* or *Torquato Tasso*.

Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Years of Travel* (1829) was one of the first novels dealing with industry and its effects upon society. The aged poet foresaw the dangers that threatened the community from an increase in machine production. It seemed to him that the man of the new generation had to choose between two possible evils: either to further the progress of the industrial system and thus to hasten a social calamity or else to migrate with the best and worthiest in the hope of finding a more propitious fate on the other side of the Atlantic. Although aware of the sad changes made necessary by the new method of production, Goethe also recognized the advantages that would accrue to mankind. His attitude was a blend of hope and resignation.

The importance of Goethe's novel as a social document was recognized soon after its appearance in 1829. With the rise of socialism, scholars such as

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

Ferdinand Gregorovius even sought to discover in it socialistic tendencies.

The Romanticists could not long hold themselves aloof from the general interest in the conflict between rich and poor. A vague intimation of beauty that shines through rags was always present in Romantic works. Cinderella always attracted more sympathy than her wealthy sisters. Brentano in *Godwi* (1801) contrasted the well-to-do with the ne'er-do-well. The faces of those who enjoyed princely bounty seemed to him to be on the whole uninteresting, while those who had to depend upon charitable pennies were most attractive; moreover, the latter possessed something of which no state could or would deprive them: their poverty. As early as 1811 Eichendorff foresaw the rise to power of the uncultured masses, and in his book *Present and Presentiment* prophesied the coming of an age devoid of beauty, an age in which the superior individual would have to fight a lonely battle against a rabble of weaklings, but a rabble emboldened by numbers. Tieck repeatedly referred in the novels of his last period, such as the *Young Master Carpenter* (1836) or *Life's Abundance* (1839), to the pleasures and the pains of poverty. However, neither in his works nor in those of his Romantic colleagues did

[8]

The Rise of the German Social Lyric

the class of wage-earners or proletarians occupy the center of attention.

Pauperism and the problems of the proletariat hover in the background of the novels of Young Germany. These writers in the Thirties still regarded the social struggle as one waged between the nobility and the bourgeoisie. In 1833 Laube wrote that the greatest peril in the future was to be expected from the defeated aristocracy of birth. Although he believed in social equality, he did not at this time look upon the rise of an aristocracy of wealth as in any way inimical to his ideas. Danger could come only from a struggle between the two privileged classes. The only vital aim of the defeated nobility would be, in his opinion, the destruction of its successor, the monied aristocracy; for the nobleman hates the poor less than he does the rich, since only the rich contest his superior social position.

Immermann in his *Epigones* (1836) undertook a critical analysis of the new social order and concluded with a gloomy prophecy of the dawning age of industry. He regarded the inroads of the machines upon the established system as a catastrophe of incalculable dimensions. Though recognizing, as Goethe had done, the important material improvements resulting from the new methods of production,

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

nevertheless as a poet and a lover of beauty he was filled with repugnance at the mathematical calculation of human power and human diligence, at the substitution of unfeeling levers for the warm fingers of the artisan. He contrasted the pale machine slave with his brother the plowman, and found that while the ruddy-checked peasant glowed with health and happiness, the factory worker bore the mark of death upon his bowed forehead and in his hollow eyes. Moreover, with every generation the contrast between the two was bound to increase. A desiccating mechanical future was hastening upon us with whirlwind speed. Industrial development could no longer be checked. Might it not be best to build dikes about our little spot of green in order to protect ourselves and our dependents as long as possible against the surging tide of industry?

It was not, however, until the middle of the fifth decade that the proletarian novel as a new and distinct type made its appearance. Translations from English and French proletarian novels were at first more popular than native productions. Problems of industry were being discussed in English fiction by Harriet Martineau, Disraeli, Bulwer, Gaskell, and Kingsley. But of all English novelists, it was Dickens who carried the greatest appeal to Ger-

[10]

The Rise of the German Social Lyric

man readers. His popularity in the mid-century decades was surpassed only by that of the Frenchman, Eugène Sue, the author of the *Mysteries of Paris*. The German reader, weary of being led from salon to salon in order to hear the ingenious conversation of spineless, problematic Young German characters, felt thrilled by the realistic environment and the vigorous race of heroes introduced by *Oliver Twist* and the *Mysteries of Paris*—both of which were translated in 1844. Dickens and Sue taught that true tragedy and true heroism were to be found not among barons and idlers, but among the poor and the outcast. Both writers painted with glaring colors, but the Frenchman outdid the Englishman in the multiplication of horrors and in the heightening of contrasts. For this reason he was at first more popular in Germany and influenced to a greater extent than did his abler contemporary the fiction of the Forties.

It was under the influence of Dickens and Sue that Ernst Willkomm, the father of the German proletarian novel, wrote his *White Slaves* (1845). This influence was also apparent in the other early novels of the fourth estate, such as *Engelchen* by Robert Prutz, begun in 1845, and *Paul* by Alexander von Ungern-Sternberg, published in the same

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

year. Industrial themes formed an essential part of the plots of novels of Ernst Dronke, Louise Otto, Th. Oelckers, Louise Aston, C. A. Schloenbach, and Otto Ruppis. Thus we see that before the middle of the nineteenth century the proletariat made its successful entry into German fiction. Its struggles with the machine and with the employing class were discussed from communistic, democratic, and aristocratic viewpoints, and readers were made acquainted with all its typical characters from the most sordid inhabitant of the slums to the noblest dreamer in an attic.

Did the German lyric in the pre-revolutionary years show any traces of the growing interest in social and industrial problems that were treated so prominently in the German novel?

The fifth decade of the nineteenth century is known in German literature as the time of efflorescence of the political lyric, and undoubtedly the political note was most prominent in the lyric of the years preceding the March Revolution. However, this poetry can mean but little to us to-day. Its flaming appeals in behalf of an uncensored press, a people's parliament, a liberal constitution, and a united Germany are now felt to be out of date.

The Rise of the German Social Lyric

Even its most radical demands—the abolition of the monarchy and the submersion of the individual states in a universal democracy—cannot move our generation that has lost faith in political panaceas as much as they stirred readers in the late Metternich era.

The time has come for a revaluation of the political poetry of the Forties. We must recognize that its message is antiquated and that its problems are no longer acute. We must salvage that small portion that is aesthetically valuable and relegate the rest to the realm of history.

It is then that the social lyric will come to the fore as the most original contribution of this decade. Its profound sympathy with the lowly and the helpless, its plea for the obliteration of class distinctions, its protest against the mechanization of life still stir the deepest chords within us. Neither the hopes nor the cynicism of the social poets of the Forties are foreign to us. Freiligrath and Heine are no less alive in our age than are Karl Henckell or Ernst Toller. The credo of Alfred Meissner might be uttered to-day by Gerhart Hauptmann, the author of *The Fool in Christ*, or by Jakob Wassermann, the author of *The World's Illusion*:

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

“Im armen Volke such’ ich Platonsstirnen,
ich such’ das Weib in den verlornen Dirnen,
die Kraft im Sklaven, der in Staub getreten,
den Gott im Sünder, der nie lernte beten,
ich suche bei den Armen, Sündgen, Kranken
des Schöpfers argverstümmelte Gedanken.”

The lyricist of the Forties discovered the proletariat and taught readers to sympathize with its struggles and despair. He was the first to paint the creatures of the slums and to develop the themes of industry that still fill the verses of contemporary poets. He did not content himself, as did Brentano and Eichendorff, with vague hints of the existence of people who were good and poor or with representation of the miner as the happy lord of the world as, for example, did Novalis in one of his most famous lyrics. Nor did he depict the spinning girl at her wheel singing of lovers gone in autumn or of lovers to come with the new May. Rather he portrayed her feverishly at work in the late hours of a cold December night, her cheeks pale, her young body bowed, her tender limbs distorted. The beggar now ceased to be a jolly figure with lyre and poodle. Poets of the Forties, such as Georg Herwegh, Alfred Meissner, Karl Beck, and Ernst Dronke, fathomed the tragic depths of a human soul that was dependent upon alms for its daily [14]

The Rise of the German Social Lyric

bread. In their lyrics this earliest and apparently simplest figure of the lower class underwent a complete transformation. The traditional musical instrument disappeared. A curse was more likely to escape from a beggar's starved lips than was a song. The faithful dog was rarely present or, if present, served as excellent food for a hungry stomach.

The beggar was not, however, the most pathetic figure of the new social lyric. A whole array of new characters, from the unemployed weaver to the overworked seamstress, from the pious pauper to the fierce criminal, made their appearance. The German lyricist was face to face with those problems of industry and modern society that to-day still trouble us. What was his reaction? How did he grapple with the new landscape of factories, with the new menace of the slums, with the intenser antagonism between rich and poor?

CHAPTER II

THE POET OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

THE social lyric that flourished in the Forties was characterized by a new tone and a greater depth of insight. Its pity was intenser, it flashes of revolt more stirring than the lyric of any time since the days of "Storm and Stress." The social literature of Germany from Bürger and Voss to Eichendorff and Chamisso was occupied with the conflict that raged between nobleman and commoner. The lyric of the Forties no longer was interested in this problem. Its attention was diverted to a struggle within the ranks of the commoners between the victorious third estate, on the one hand, and the pauperized masses, on the other; and because the antagonism between these two forces has not yet been reconciled, the social poetry of the Forties appeals to us as wholly modern, whereas that of the decade immediately preceding is felt to be distinctly antiquated.

No better example can be quoted than that of the leading lyrist of the Thirties, Adalbert von Chamisso [16]

The Poet of the Middle Class

misso. An analysis of the problems he faced and an evaluation of the solutions he offered will most clearly reveal the state of the German social lyric at the close of the reign of Frederick William III and will throw into sharper relief the contributions of the poets of the revolutionary decade.

The treatment of social problems in the poetry of Chamisso has not been hitherto systematically investigated. It is true that in the Nineties attention was called by Oscar Walzel to this phase of Chamisso's work and that a number of later writers include a brief discussion of his poems dealing with the lower classes, such as "The Old Washerwoman" or "The Beggar and His Dog." Yet nowhere do we find a detailed analysis of the peculiar position occupied by the aristocratic poet who, as we shall see, almost alone in his age made the despised bourgeoisie the object and the ideal of his lyric muse.

Both the writers of the Romantic Movement and those of the succeeding generation, much as they differed in their attitude towards other problems of their day, were with few exceptions united in a common hatred of the middle class. Against it are directed not only the shafts of a Novalis but also those of a Heine, not only the scorn of a Tieck and a Frederick Schlegel but also the enmity of a Gutz-

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

kow and a Georg Büchner. "Why should a thing like this run about between heaven and earth?" writes Büchner. "Its whole life consists merely of attempts to ward off the terrible monotony of existence. Let it die. It is the only experience it can ever have."

But even though the Romanticists and the writers of Young Germany are united in their antipathy towards the middle class in whom both see the enthronement of mediocrity, of hollow conventionalism, of hypocritical morality, nevertheless they differ in their sympathies, the former taking up the defense of the nobility as the social class which is to reintroduce the long lost ideal state, the latter, under the influence of St. Simonian ideas, championing the cause of the rising fourth estate from which the rejuvenation of a decaying society is to be expected.

Chamisso's inmost nature revolted against class distinctions and class divisions. Though an aristocrat by birth, he nowhere defends the privileges of his own class. In his poem "The Count and the Serf," he shows the absurdities of the aristocrat's insistence upon special privileges due to his superior blood. The son of a countess and the son of her
[18]

The Poet of the Middle Class

housekeeper are interchanged at birth and, even after they have grown up, no one can tell which is the nobleman and which the serf. Yet each insists that due honor and obedience be shown to his superior birth. By confronting the two claimants with each other and letting each in bitter earnestness parody the haughty speech of the other, Chamisso clearly wished to indicate that nature knew no distinction between nobleman and serf, that all existing artificial distinctions were the product of a past age. This message was not at all new, but it was astonishing to have it come from the pen of a nobleman. In several poems, such as "The Prayer of the Widow" (1831), "The Exiles" (1831), or "Retribution" (1829), Chamisso takes even a hostile attitude towards the aristocracy. The hero of the last named poem is an executioner whose duty is to brand and to behead the foes and victims of the established privileged order. Not unlike most of his literary prototypes, he has a beautiful daughter who is loved by a count. Unlike other executioners, however, Chamisso's hero is the foe of the nobility whose hateful work he performs, and the horrible vengeance which he wreaks upon the count whom he discovers asleep in the arms of his daughter and

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

whom he brands on the forehead is intended as a warning to the ruling class by the mistreated commoners.

Chamisso's sympathies are decidedly not with the aristocracy but with the bourgeoisie and his picture of the ideal life is, on the whole, that of the good-natured, complacent citizen of the pre-industrial era. In his "Legend of Alexander" (1833) he remarks that he, the poet, has not the slightest desire to be a world conqueror like the Macedonian, that he much prefers a quiet home, a loving wife, frolicking children, something of the fine arts, and—a little wine. The scion of an ancient distinguished family, who until late in life wanders about as a man without a country, without a home, without a family, is filled with longing for the simple life and the simple joys of the ordinary German "Bürger." Indeed, when after many years he does find a pleasant asylum in Germany, his heart overflows with gratitude. Unlike the Romanticists, many of whom dreamed beside their firesides of escape from philistine neighbors to distant countries and remote peoples, he, the far-wanderer, was only too grateful for the quiet and even tenor of his life in Berlin.

In spite of a certain romantic melancholy, a sentimental pessimism, Chamisso's attitude towards ex-
[20]

The Poet of the Middle Class

perience remains genial and sympathetic. It is, on the whole, comparable to that of the jovial, red-cheeked business man or official, who has never moved about in an environment of haste, turmoil, and nervous unrest. The optimism and faith in continual and inevitable progress, which have always been part of the philosophy of the middle class, find expression in several of Chamisso's poems. He adjures the mob that clamors for immediate gratification of its needs to have patience. Time would right all wrongs. The effort of the masses to hasten the process of change was just as vain as were the measures of the king to retard it. The march of time could neither be accelerated nor delayed. Reaction and revolution are equally distasteful to Chamisso. It is precisely this honest, good-natured, middle-class position which gave him the ideal qualities necessary in an editor of a poetic "Almanach" and which enabled him to remain on excellent terms with Romanticists and with writers of Young Germany, with Uhland on the one hand and with Heine and Freiligrath on the other.

Much has been made of Chamisso's poems dealing with the lower classes, and scholars have professed to see in them the modern side of this poet. Yet it is precisely in those lyrics that the wide gulf sep-

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

arating his attitude from the modern one is most apparent. Thus, in the representation of peasant life, Chamisso adheres to the tradition of the eighteenth century as depicted in German literature by Bürger and Voss. Like them, he insists that the peasant is neither a toy in the hands of a higher social class nor an inferior being to be despised by those who thrive on the fruits of his labor. For him, the peasant forms the backbone of a healthy society. He is simple and pious, faithful to the God and the traditions of his fathers. In contrast to reactionary lords and blood-stained revolutionists, he represents sane conservatism. Thus, the brutal soldiers who are sent to Brittany during the French Revolution in order to compel the peasants to abandon their ancient form of worship can effect nothing against the latter's stubborn determination to die for their belief. The brutality of gallant parasites is most evident when contrasted with the devout nature of the peasant. Even if the peasant woman could invoke no other weapon against the tyranny of her lords save the vengeance of heaven, God, the Avenger, was sure to hear the prayer of the wronged widow and death came as a frequent guest into the house of her oppressors.

Nothing speaks better for the noble character of
[22]

The Poet of the Middle Class

Chamisso than his defence of the peasant class, whose members once razed his ancestral castle and drove him forth from idle comfort into the hardships of exile. He has only words of blessing for the peasants of Boncourt who push their plows over the fertile fields that but for the revolution might have been his own. Although he recognizes the value and dignity of the peasant's calling, yet, in depicting individual members of this class, he does not break with the literary tradition which portrayed the worker of the field as a ridiculous boor. Chamisso's peasants are slow-witted, superstitious, very trusting, and hence easily deluded. In sketching these uncouth figures, the poet gives his humor full rein. In one poem, entitled "You had better not," the father of a beautiful daughter calls together an assembly of his fellow-serfs to confer upon the question whether his daughter should allow herself to be kissed by the squire, since in the list of duties and obligations which a serf owes his lord, no provision has been made for kisses that are to be given or received. In another poem, "The Szekler Assembly," the peasants when called together to act in an emergency—the floods ruining the crops—unanimously agree to adjourn for several days in order to think over the proper steps to be taken, and upon

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

reconvening arrive at the weighty resolution to do nothing.

Under the influence of his countryman Béranger, Chamisso delves into the depths of society for his poetic characters. However, unlike the French poet whose social outcasts are painted realistically with but little attempt at idealization, he imparts to his humble figures traditional picturesque and sentimental features. Whereas Béranger's beggar is the product of an unjustly organized society, Chamisso's beggar is merely the chance victim of a police edict which, by imposing a tax on dogs, threatens to rob him of the only living creature that has befriended him. As if the revocation of an edict would remove the tragic elements from a beggar's existence! The poet's criticism is directed against a harsh tax and not against an unjust social order. Indeed Chamisso, who so often raised his voice to protest against the dominant political régime, looked upon the regnant social order as, on the whole, the best possible one.

It was true that in this society, as in all others, there were bound to crop up tragic situations such as the one confronting the old washerwoman who, after working happily for many a decade, finally becomes too weak to earn her bread. But then, would not a charitable collection suffice to relieve all difficulties [24]

The Poet of the Middle Class

of this kind? The Stein-Hardenberg reforms had brought about the emancipation of the serfs of the fields. The rise of industry and the substitution of machines for hand-labor would, in his opinion, bring about the liberation of the serfs of industry and the equalization of rich and poor. Chamisso welcomes the new age and the transformations wrought by coal and iron, by the steam-engine and the railroad. His friend and biographer, Julius Edward Hitzig, tells of him that he called the new means of communication the wings of time and that he looked forward with confident hope to the dawning machine age. "He regarded it as the moral duty of every rich man to devote part of his wealth to further the construction of railroads in order thereby to assist in ushering in the new era." He is among the first Germans to make use of the railroad, travelling in the summer of 1837 on the Leipzig-Dresden route, the first part of which was just then being completed. As early as 1830 he recognized the poetic possibilities of the new inventions. In his poem "The Steam Horse," he describes himself seated on a steed, impelled by the new source of energy, travelling westward faster than the sun, so that he can re-visit yesterday and the days preceding, the day of his birth, and the day of his grandparents' marriage.

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

Then turning eastward on his iron steed, he is able to outdistance time and to peer into the future. Speeding past our own age, he hears a voice inquiring of him whether the future has revealed to him the value of the stocks that were then fluctuating and whether it were wise to invest in Rothschild bonds.

Chamisso's attitude towards the railroads must be carefully distinguished from that of the Romantic poets who, until the last moment of their lives, lamented the passing of the stage-coach, and from that of thoroughly modern poets who showed a deep understanding of this important invention.

It is in the railroad lyrics of the Thirties and Forties that the clash between the old order and the new finds illuminating expression. Poets whose eyes were fixed on the past had reason to mourn the transformation of the landscape disturbed ever more and more by the bustle of commerce and the snorting of locomotives. Noise, smoke, and sparks seemed to be putting an end to the idyllic charm of travel. Forests were being cut down in order to make room for iron roads. The highway was being depopulated of its picturesque figures. The quiet tenor of life was giving way to nerve-racking haste.

The Austrian poet Grillparzer interprets this
[26]

The Poet of the Middle Class

change as a dethronement of the spirit by the usurper Commerce. Railroads, loans, and Jesuits are for him the quickest roads to damnation. Surely conditions in Austria were bad enough. Must railroads be constructed so that the country could speed faster on the road to national bankruptcy?

The laments over the coming of the locomotive are continued at the close of the Thirties by the minor poet Johannes Minckwitz. He fears that the new age is interested solely in utility. The people love beer breweries, cotton factories, and steel engines that thunder through storied highways. Meanwhile, beauty is being neglected and poetry is beginning to pale.

Not even Nikolaus Lenau, who often showed a keen insight into coming changes, was wholly free from gloomy doubts as to the desirability of the railroad. He too questions whether material improvements will lead us to salvation. What if we do hasten with the speed of an arrow across forests and groves? Are we any nearer to freedom, the chosen bride of man?

With Christian Friedrich Scherenberg and Justinus Kerner, the lyric attack upon the railroad reaches its climax. In a poem entitled "Railroads and Again Railroads" (1843), the former paints the

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

locomotive as a snorting iron-limbed monster that rushes on with the speed of death, unmindful of the flowers destroyed by its hoof-beats or the birds scattered by its breath. All things living fear it and retreat before its course. Gone is the vain longing for rarely seen spaces, the dream of splendor beyond the hills, the pleasure of companionship on the road. Speed is the cry of the hour. Life is divided into minutes. At the sound of a whistle, human beings are hurled into the machine or whirled out of it. Reality is destroying the last havens still left to the Romanticists. "O Railroad," he exclaims, "why did you come and rob us of our earth!"

It is in a similar vein that Justinus Kerner bewails the passing of beauty and romance from the face of the world. In a poem entitled "In the Grass" (1845), he represents himself lying on the grass and gazing at the sky; for the blue firmament alone still harbored peace, and this peace the poet wished to enjoy before ships began to populate the heavens and air-trucks to obscure the face of the sun, before birds disappeared even as the salmon from the Rhine and drops of oil dripped down instead of refreshing rain.

The first important lyric defence of the new method of travel was undertaken by Anastasius [28]

The Poet of the Middle Class

Grün in 1836. His "Poetry of Steam" bears in its title a challenge to the Romanticists. He asks whether those who decried the unpoetic features of railroads and steamships regarded the torture of the stage-coach, the exertion of rowing, or the dependence of the sailing vessel upon the wind as any more poetical. Rather does it seem to him that the lyrist ought to be filled with enthusiasm at man's great victory over time and space, and he invites his fellow poets to join with him in singing hymns of joy to the coming age of steel and steam.

The poetic welcome extended to the railroad in 1836 by Anastasius Grün is repeated two years later with even more stirring pathos by Karl Beck. The iron rails are for him marriage bonds joining the states, wedding rings exchanged by various communities. Let not poets mock at the interest of people in railroad stocks and bonds, for these commercial papers were the strongest links uniting a divided people.

Romantic hatred of the new inventions is subjected to ridicule by H. O. Lüning in his lyric "Railroad and Romantic" (1844). He sees approaching the turning point of the struggle for human liberation from age-old serfdom. Every man must feel the glow of pride in being privileged to participate

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

in this momentous battle. The Romanticist, however, continues to burrow in his ancestral vault and to sing of the splendor of blue eyes. He has copious tears for the grass and the flowers, but none for suffering human beings.

A calmer mood pervades Louise Otto's lyric "Once and Now" (1847), in which this poetess also takes issue with the Romanticists. While agreeing that the railroad has put an end to idyllic peace and quiet happiness, she yet does not regret its spread. She feels that the peace of a churchyard has lasted far too long, and that the happiness of lethargy was not at all commendable. New voices now pulsated throughout the universe. With every iron track that was laid, new life sprang into being. The locomotive heralded the great awakening, the flooding of the nations with joy and brotherly coöperation.

The best lyric aroused by the railroad controversy is undoubtedly Gottfried Keller's poetic reply in 1845 to the lamentations of Justinus Kerner. The Swiss writer welcomes the new inventions as the great agents of spiritual emancipation, for they aimed to provide human beings with additional leisure to enjoy the beauty of earth and sky and sea. In his opinion, there was no need to shudder at the thought of airplanes that might one day be invented.

The Poet of the Middle Class

If a hundred years later an airship laden with Greek wine should come sailing in at dawn, he would like to be its merry pilot.

Two years before the appearance of this poem, Heinrich Heine, in commenting on the opening of the railroad from Paris to Orleans and to Rouen, had written of the horror and the fascination that this revolution in transportation exercised upon the human spirit. "Our fathers must have felt thus when America was discovered, when the invention of powder was made known through the first shots, or when the printing press sent forth into the world the first proof-sheets of the divine word. The railroad is another such providential event that gives mankind a new direction, that changes the color and the form of life. A new phase in universal history is about to begin and our generation may boast of having been present at its birth. What a transformation must now take place in our ideas and in our attitude towards reality! Even the fundamental concepts of space and time are now tottering. The railroads annihilate space and only time is now left to us. Would that we had enough money to kill time as well in a decent manner! One can now travel in three and a half hours to Orleans or to Rouen. Think of what will happen when the

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

lines to Belgium and Germany are completed! It seems to me as though the mountains and forests of all countries were moving on Paris. Already I smell the fragrance of the German lindens and see before my door the foam of the North Sea."

Thus, two distinct attitudes towards the startling changes in transportation are apparent. They are the Romantic and the modern. Both find able champions in the lyric of the Thirties and Forties. What is the position occupied by Chamisso, whose "Steam-Horse" is one of the earliest and most popular poems dealing with the new inventions? Does not his Romantic treatment of a realistic theme, as illustrated by this lyric, confirm our impression that he stands midway between the old and the new, that he welcomes the imminent social and industrial changes without wholly comprehending their full import? Are we not to-day likely to regard as a naïve dream the optimistic view often expressed in his verse that it is vain to arrest time in its course, that progress is inevitable? We to-day who know that the birth pains of the new age were not to be avoided may perhaps wonder at this trusting faith of the poet. Yet there is no denying that Chamisso was giving expression to the prevalent attitude among the middle class of that day, an attitude that found

[32]

The Poet of the Middle Class

expression even as late as the Fifties in Freytag's *Debit and Credit*. Chamisso, the nobleman, is the literary exponent of the third estate on the eve of the Industrial Revolution. He is not the spokesman of the proletariat. He is not the poet of the new society.

CHAPTER III

WELTSCHMERZ AND THE SOCIAL LYRIC

THE social lyric which arose in the Forties had its forerunners not primarily in the sentimental poems of humble life, such as those popularized by Chamisso, but rather in the Weltschmerz of the Twenties and the Thirties. This mood which swept over Europe with renewed intensity after the apparent failure of the ideals of the French Revolution was essentially anti-social, and yet it bore within itself the seeds of the modern proletarian lyric. The poet who lived in the age of Weltschmerz was conscious of his superiority to the reactionary environment. He felt himself a victim of the dominant political and social institutions that could harbor no free spirits. It seemed to him that the individual who had to live out his years in corrupt modern society was destined for promethean suffering. Never could he hope to attain salvation in this or in any other world. Perhaps, at best, forgetfulness of pain might be granted him. Yet where was he to find this for-

[34]

Weltschmerz and the Social Lyric

getfulness? Where, but in escape from the haunts of men, in the ruins of antiquity, in the mysterious Orient, in the refuge of lone caves, in the wide spaces of the prairies, in the majestic splendor of the sea, in the contemplation of time's immensities? Where else, but in the intoxication of wine and in the pursuit of beautiful women? Thus the anti-social heroes of Lord Byron and his German imitators were depicted. There appeared, on the one hand, lone and melancholy roamers such as Childe Harold and, on the other hand, witty sensualists such as Don Juan who avenged the sins of mankind against them by sinning in turn. All of these characters, however, are tortured by the consciousness of the apparent absence of a well-defined purpose in the universe. Though they may for a time flirt with pleasures of every variety, they still doubt whether these form the primary aim of all life. A cry of pain often resounds from the depth of their soul, a cry for something that is more than a temporary opiate. Gradually the recognition dawns upon them that there is only one way of permanently relieving them from suffering and of providing them with a sacred mission in life. Since Weltschmerz had its source in the antagonism between man's ideals and his environment, it had to give way to a healthier

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

mood as soon as this antagonism ceased to be felt. But how was a reconciliation between the two hostile forces to be effected? Surely not by the submission of the superior individual to his unworthy environment. Rather must he seek to mould society and its institutions in the image of his ideals. He must awaken in the souls of millions the craving for a life of the spirit. He must provide sufficient food for hungry mouths and hungry minds, so that all men could abandon trivial oppressions and unworthy envies and join him in the pursuit of beauty and truth and their revelation in art. It was hence the holiest duty of the superior individual to be the oracle and guardian angel of the helpless masses. These were brutal and depraved through no fault of their own. Social tyranny weighed heavily upon them. Enslaved for generations by hard-hearted, gain-seeking masters, the naïve children of earth, the peasants and hand-laborers, had sunk in bestial stupor, even as the tanned serfs from Africa's strand. From this stupor the poet could awaken them. His flaming verses could rouse the conscience of the world. Indeed his own salvation was dependent upon the salvation of the mass. Only the liberation of society from the egotistical few could effect his liberation from pessimism to renewed faith in man.

[36]

Weltschmerz and the Social Lyric

Ideas such as these were already present in the minds of Rousseau and of that "Storm and Stress" generation which saw the birth of modern Weltschmerz. But they gained renewed impetus in the heyday of this mood, the period of Byron and Shelley, of Heine and Young Germany.

Byron, the leading English representative of Weltschmerz, excellently typifies the poet who sought an escape from this mood in social service. For a hundred years and more he has been hailed as the apostle of the oppressed and as the poetic spokesman of the suffering millions. Was it, however, wholly love of the rabble that in 1812 led him, the arch-aristocrat, to rise in defence of the exploited workers of Nottingham in his maiden speech before the House of Lords? Was his active participation in the plots of the Carbonari due to his great attachment to the overburdened plebeians of Italy? Did he die at Missolonghi so that a Greek peasant might sow crops to be reaped by a native lord and not by a foreign Pasha? Surely he, the nobleman by birth, breeding, and character, fought not for the ignorant, ill-dressed, and ill-mannered masses whom he could barely tolerate in his vicinity, but for an ideal present alone in his mind, an ideal nurtured by his complete disgust with his own class, the ideal

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

of an innocent, good-natured people who could seize the reins of government from an aristocracy that he knew to be corrupt and empty of vision.

A generation earlier the disciples of Rousseau were taught to look with loving eyes upon the common people. But intimate contact with the rabble convinced many of them that it was far from lovable. Hence they preferred to transport their gaze to foreign continents and to sing of noble savages in distant lands whose souls were untainted by the vices of civilization. Similarly, Byron soon realized that the regeneration of society could not emanate from the factory workers of Manchester and Nottingham, and he sought the object of his ideal among the people of Italy. But here too disappointment awaited him. The millions he came to liberate were not to be stirred from their lethargy. Treachery and indifference jeopardized every plan of revolt in which he participated. So at length he cast his eyes towards Greece and there he met a dramatic death, fighting for his ideal of a free people.

Byron's struggle for a new social and political order may be regarded as a struggle against *Weltschmerz* within his own soul. This mood assumed, as we have seen, the lack of a well defined purpose
[38]

Weltschmerz and the Social Lyric

in the universe. Hence to overcome it, an ideal or fiction had to be set up consciously or subconsciously, and he who believed or at least acted as if he believed in the reality of this ideal or fiction would be saved from a morbid attitude and won for a joyous creative life. Dominance of society by its upper class had brought wrong and confusion into the world. Assumption of power by the lower classes would restore the natural state of justice, would bring back the blessed fruits of the original social contract. Work towards this end in itself brought lasting forgetfulness of individual pain. Such is the attitude typical of a Weltschmerz poet. It is best expressed in the life and works of Shelley, the close associate of Byron and the greatest English social lyricist of his generation. It explains why the writers of Young Germany could lavish so much praise upon the individualistic Byronic heroes and at the same time accept wholeheartedly the social philosophy of St. Simon. Escape from Weltschmerz and not love of the plebeians is perhaps the key to the early social poems of Heine, who has been called the German Byron. Perhaps the same relation may be seen to exist between the early "Wüsten und Löwenpoesie" of Freiligrath and his later social

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

lyrics as exists between Byron's poems of heroes who roam over land and sea and those poems that chant of liberty and equality.

In the career of Karl Beck, the earliest of the German political poets to espouse the cause of the fourth estate, one may best follow the transition from *Weltschmerz* to social poetry. Beck, who lived from 1817 to 1879, is hardly known to-day. Yet for a time he was looked upon as a star of first magnitude.

In 1839 Gutzkow placed upon his head the laurels of Byron. Arnold Ruge praised him unstintingly. Varnhagen von Ense admired him. A host of rhymsters imitated him. Alexander von Humboldt received him at Berlin. Ferdinand Freiligrath and Georg Herwegh were impressed by the power of his imagination and the vigor of his language. Friedrich Engels wrote of him as the resurrected Schiller and recommended him to his friends as the future Goethe. The literary public was intoxicated by his glowing rhetoric, his passionate imagery, his consuming love of freedom, and did not at first censure his confused thoughts and exaggerated emotions.

Beck mocked at the poets that "yearned like sweet little birds to fall asleep in the safe harbor of a maiden's bosom." He wished to go out as a
[40]

Weltschmerz and the Social Lyric

German Child Harold into the horrible battlefields where nations bled, tears “flared,” and human hearts broke. He called for a new Samson to burst the chains of the Philistines, for a new David to fell the Goliath of prejudice, for a new Bible, and a new bill of rights. In his collected poems, which went through four editions from 1844 to 1846, there was, however, in spite of this vague rhetoric, no protest against specific laws or definite social or political ills. In his poem “Resurrection” he even pleaded with the king to solve the social question by taxing the usurers and donating adequate funds to buy black bread for all the deserving poor. His rhapsodies of freedom and equality were felt to be so little dangerous to the established order that, when the censor in 1844 confiscated the first edition, the king of Prussia immediately ordered it to be released. As long as Beck confined himself to the lamentations of Weltschmerz or to the adoration of abstract social virtues, he could not be said to belong to the front rank of social poets, in spite of the spell exercised for a time by his verses.

When in 1846, however, he published his *Songs of the Poor Man*, a book that quickly went through three editions, he produced a remarkable work which far surpassed its predecessors in depth of feeling and

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

in clearness of vision. Self-pity led him to pity others. His own pain, the subject of so much exaggeration in his earlier *Weltschmerz* period, sank into insignificance when compared with the bitter pain of the hungry, mistreated millions. He saw human beings divided into two hostile classes, masters and slaves, oppressors and oppressed, rich and poor, and through the mouths of the pariahs he hurled fierce accusations against society.

“Ihr Seligen könnt euch pflegen und mästen,
Wir spähen für euch nach Kohlen und Ästen,
Wir frieren und hacken vor euern Palästen,
Doch euch ist wohl und warm.

Ihr habet Orden und Ämter und Pfründen,
Wir leben um euer Lob zu verkünden,
Wir schmeicheln euern Launen und Sünden,
Denn—warum sind wir arm?”

Though Beck was at his best when thundering against social injustice in savage tones such as here indicated, he was nevertheless also capable of touching softer chords. There was often deep tragic pathos in his descriptions of scenes in proletarian homes. In one such scene that takes place in a Silesian hut, the hungry wife of a weaver yearns for potatoes and a glass of wine, but her husband reminds her that they are not living in paradise and
[42]

Weltschmerz and the Social Lyric

that the last crumbs have just disappeared from their table. However, the resourceful woman, remembering that her sister upon marrying concealed two loaves of bread as a charm that wards off hunger, rushes forth and obtains this precious stale food. Then, as the family sits about the table enjoying the frugal meal, the husband speaks of days gone by when a simple weaver of Augsburg, named Fugger, invited an emperor to dinner.

In a poetic preface addressed to the house of Rothschild, the Fuggers of the nineteenth century, Beck called the banker the King of Kings whose signature determined the fate of innumerable beings. In vain did the youth of Europe cry out for justice, freedom, and light. The Lord of Gold held nations in his grip by means of his stocks and bonds. The charity of the millionaire should not deceive anyone, for he was but paying back in drops what he had taken from the workers in buckets. A day would come when his kingdom and that of his petty pupils would collapse. The glory of his economic empire was the glory of the setting sun.

Beck was not, as Georg Adler, the historian of the social-democratic movement, erroneously called him, "a socialist de pur sang." He had no remedy for existing evils, unless the plea for charity be

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

deemed a remedy. He could only weakly implore God to remove misery from the firesides of his brothers. He would hold up Fugger as a model of philanthropy, as a rich craftsman who did not forget his more unfortunate countrymen. He preached no doctrine of reform or revolution. He sought but the amelioration of distress. He flashed before the consciences of readers glaring pictures of social injustice. He was a master of pathos, an orator in verse, a musician with organ-tones at his command, a painter who hurled gorgeous barbaric colors. He apostrophized the potato as though it were the youngest and most tender divinity born of the loins of Zeus. He wrote a dirge on the failure of the annual crop to the melody of Hauff's "Morgenrot! Morgenrot!" He was the first German lyricist to portray the slums of our modern towns. There we see wild beings in decaying huts; deserted, barefooted, unkempt children, huddled together as a protection against cold and loneliness; the organ grinder who with his monotonous song is the hero of this little world; the emaciated factory slaves who file out of the stalls of their masters like a long, long train of corpses. In workers' quarters the nights are spent in gloom and the days in restless toil. The maiden who sews until her eyes are bleary and her fingers

Weltschmerz and the Social Lyric

numb must wrestle with the temptation held out by those who offer gold ducats for her love. The proletarian woman must nurse the babe of the money-changer and lull it to sleep with pleasant songs, while her own child withers and dies for want of care. Fathers are teaching their offspring to beg and mothers are selling their daughters to the lustful rich. However, when drums beat and soldiers parade, all windows are thrown wide open and old and young gape in wonder. If only these brave troops that the populace admired so much would bring bread instead of powder and bullets! If only these splendid heroes thought less of protecting the silks of the rich and more of providing shirts to cover the nakedness of the poor! But a bloody day might come, even though none desired it, when the people themselves would take up arms, when the desperate mob would sally forth with glistening bayonets, and beat its own rebellious music on a deafening drum.

While Beck's violent lyrics that moved his generation most have hardly been reprinted, his plaintive idyl of two humble souls and their humble love has retained its popularity until our own day. The hero and the heroine are indicated by the title "Lackey and Maid" as belonging to a calling whose

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

prosaic problems had hardly ever been touched upon by lyrists in preceding decades. The orphaned boy, who envied the idle dog his sheltered kennel and the cat her warm fur, donned a servant's livery in order to escape want. It was part of his duty to "smile amid sorrow, to feed the mastiff, to saddle the horse, and at night to provide a flower of sin for the breast of his master." This humble being, who could call naught his own, dreamed of marrying the lady of his heart's delight. She had not, it is true, hands like satin. How should she, scrubbing the floors all day? Nor did perfumed oil exude from her flowing locks that were often immersed in smoke. She sent him no pictures and no letters with golden borders. Nor did he present her with a ring or a love poem. They aged quickly, biding their hearts in patience, waiting for a time when they could earn enough to wed. Then after decades had passed and the priest could marry them, she bought a spinning wheel and he a hut wherein to dwell. But joy in its intensest forms could no longer beam upon them. They had lived apart in all the years of youth when their hearts were bursting with passion. Now they merely stared into the crackling fire and were glad that they could call a home their own and know hours of calm away from duty.

Weltschmerz and the Social Lyric

Other writers, such as Moritz Hartmann, Hermann Püttmann, and Ludwig Köhler, attempted in the Forties to introduce the figure of the servant girl into lyric poetry; but with little success, since their theme, the love of the maid for her rich master or the son of her master, was not in itself new but merely a rewording of the oft exploited situation in which a girl, fair but poor, loved a hero of a superior social class. The heroine of Hartmann's poem "The Maid" has learned the lesson of renunciation which her social status imposed on her. She is content to polish the shoes of madame's son, to brush his clothes, to prepare the linen for his bridal couch, and only in her quiet chamber to glow with love for him. In the lyric of the Forties, the servant girl seems doomed to a pale, bloodless existence. Neither Hartmann's nor Beck's heroines yield to the call for love within them. Those maids, however, who defy social convention and succumb to the hot lure of life end in death and disgrace. Only a change in the social order can remove the tragedy that now seems to inhere in the position of a domestic servant.

Over Beck's lyrics there broods a vague hope of better days to come, a vague fear of impending social strife. In one of his poems, entitled "Lore-

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

Ley," he represented gold as the dangerous siren that lured men of all walks of life to crime and destruction. By generalizing upon the evil effects of gold—a favorite topic of conversation then as ever since—Beck was sure to meet with general approval. Since no specific evils were attacked, no one had reason to feel injured. The poet of *Weltschmerz* showed himself as little capable of curing the ills of society as of curing the ills within his own breast. It was therefore well-nigh inevitable that, as soon as his early enthusiasm for intangible ideals such as justice and equality died down, a pessimistic resignation should take possession of his soul. The failure of the uprising of 1848 stifled his last hopes for a social and political regeneration. As a much embittered man he made his peace with the Austrian government and renounced his radical activities. He who at twenty had been mentioned in one breath with Byron, Goethe, and Schiller was thoroughly forgotten before he had passed his thirties. Though he lived until 1879, struggling against economic need up to his dying day, he produced few additional lyrics of any value.

His importance for German literature was that of a pioneer of the social lyric. Seeking an escape from individual pain, this poet of *Weltschmerz* discov-
[48]

Weltschmerz and the Social Lyric

ered the pain that gnawed at the roots of society, and in impassioned verses appealed to his contemporaries for pity with the suffering human creature. Pity alone would halt social injustice and moral decay. Pity would bring cheer to the poor and the criminal. Pity would convert the rich oppressor into a social savior. Beck was at his best as a lyrist of pity and it was this note that reverberated strongly in the literature of the Forties.

CHAPTER IV

THE LYRIC OF SOCIAL PITY

SOCIAL pity was bound to increase with the greater intensity of the social struggle. The industrial changes left countless human wrecks in their wake. Competition with the machine brought disaster even to the most skillful artisans. Often indeed the unscrupulous idler, who could take advantage of a temporary change in supply and demand, rose to the dignified position of a manufacturer, while his god-fearing and diligent neighbor toiled at ever decreasing wages. Moreover, when crops failed and the price of bread rose, then tragedy entered the homes of workers who were utterly irresponsible for their distress.

The laments and pleas for help on the part of these innocent sufferers roused a response in the hearts of all sensitive people. Thus, Bettina von Arnim planned in 1844 to issue a tract dealing with the wretched conditions among the poor, but had to abandon this undertaking when she realized that

[50]

The Lyric of Social Pity

her non-political motives might be misinterpreted by the authorities. Her demands for social justice, included in the book she dedicated in 1843 to King Frederick William IV of Prussia and entitled *This Book Belongs to the King*, had already brought down upon her head the wrath of the Prussian minister, who charged her with stirring up discontent and rebellion. She, however, disliked all revolutionary movements and preferred to place her faith in spiritual rather than in physical weapons. She appealed to Frederick William IV to cease building cathedrals and to begin erecting huts for the homeless. In her eyes the aristocrat and the pauper were alike children of God. The nobility of a person was manifested not by his choice of parents but by his humane deeds. "Noble blood is scattered throughout the world and much of it circulates in obscure veins, yet only that is recognized which is catalogued. I, however, tell you that I regard all men as ignoble who fail to recognize their kind in rags."

In bitter words Bettina attacked those rulers and statesmen who despised the proletariat and who yet did not fail to call upon it in hours of need. "When a foe is to be faced, then you ferret out these creatures in their nooks, then the state gives them uniforms and has them march in step. When the lord

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

of the land wants to advance to battle, then they are good enough for you as fodder for hostile cannon. But if any come back and cry out for food, then you regard them as dregs of society and force them back into their old mire. You even forget where they have disappeared to. As far as you are concerned, they may have been swallowed up by the earth, and if they grumble you will show them that you are the lord."

In a series of short sketches in this same book Bettina presented vivid scenes of proletarian homes that she herself visited. The human misery that she discovered in the slums of Berlin beggared all description. She saw old men who wove snow white linen for others, but who themselves had not a single shirt to cover their nakedness. She saw mothers spinning from dawn to sunset without earning sufficient money to feed their hungry, shivering children. In the capital of Prussia there were revealed to her the rapacity of the state that demanded taxes of the poorest citizens and the cruelty of landlords who deprived their unfortunate tenants of shelter when rent was unpaid. In one district she discovered two thousand five hundred people quartered in four hundred rooms. A rope divided these rooms into four parts. In each corner a family dwelt, and where the

[52]

The Lyric of Social Pity

ropes crossed, a bed was prepared for one who was even more needy and who was supported by these poor. Real charity could be found among these neglected members of society who gave of their bread of poverty and not among the well-known philanthropists who bequeathed their surplus wealth to churches and cathedrals. Let not the upper middle class vie with the nobility in building luxurious temples, grottos, and dancing fountains. Let them rather build dwellings for the homeless. Let the rich man convert his English cottage to a German hut where German poverty may find recreation. Let him divide his English garden into plots for potatoes and bread, and he would be acknowledged with greater right as the true nobleman.

The increasing economic distress in the years 1843 and 1844 resulted in the organization of societies for the amelioration of conditions among the pauperized workers. Berlin saw the first of these societies in the fall of the latter year and soon other cities followed suit. At first the government looked favorably upon these "Vereine für das Wohl der arbeitenden Klassen," in which men of all social ranks were to take part. The King of Prussia even promised to donate part of his private funds for this purpose. Radical leaders, however, soon began to

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

dominate these newly formed organizations, and the discussion of current social wrongs threatened to obscure the purely charitable aim. The Prussian authorities, fearing the rise of a German Chartist movement, thereupon withdrew their support and did all in their power to obstruct those activities for which they themselves were originally partly responsible. Nevertheless, the atmosphere of social discussion, which these and similar societies helped in arousing, continued to spread with alarming rapidity.

Workers' clubs began to spring up. At meetings social lyrics were sometimes recited or sung. Of one such meeting Adolf Schults, a poet of the Wuppertal, has left a report. There poems of Wolfgang Müller and Hermann Püttmann, whose subject matter was taken from proletarian life, produced a profound impression upon the listeners.

Just as in England and in France so also in Germany lyrics contrasting the privations of the industrious poor with the luxuries of the undeserving rich, found favor with the mass of readers. Chartist lyrics and selections from Ebenezer Elliott's *Corn Law Rhymes* circulated in German versions. Thomas Hood's "Song of the Shirt" with its heart-rending cry of "Oh, God! that bread should be so [54]

The Lyric of Social Pity

dear, and flesh and blood so cheap!" was translated by Freiligrath soon after its appearance in 1843 and became no less popular in German than in the English original.

Béranger's influence, that had been strongly felt in the Thirties, continued unabated. After the translations by Chamisso, Franz von Gaudy, and Philipp Nathusius, there followed in the Forties those by Ludwig Seeger. The anonymous author of *Fraternal Songs of a Rhenish Poet* (1846), who was perhaps Wolfgang Müller of Königswinter, acknowledged that he owed his inspiration to the troubadour of the huts. Georg Herwegh paid an eloquent tribute to the French poet whom he called "the nightingale with eagle's claws" and to whom he dedicated one of his best lyrics.

In an essay on the relation of literature to the masses, Herwegh called upon the Germans to follow the example of Béranger. Let them not neglect the poetry of the huts, for the people who dwelt therein were no less interesting than the lazy inhabitants of the palaces. Let the poets realize that the uncultured person experienced joy and pain, comedy and tragedy in no smaller degree than the highly cultured individual. Why prate of educating the masses? Were not the leading literary figures se-

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

lecting their characters from the upper social strata and refusing to descend to the slums? Yet only among humble beings were hidden stores of beauty and unrevealed treasures of poetry still awaiting the sympathethic glance of the lyricist.

In two poems of 1842 Herwegh undertook to portray the fate of two human creatures for whom, when alive, no poet chanted psalms and for whom, when dead, no priest read masses. One of these, entitled "Poor Jacob," was an elegy on the death of a beggar, a plea for pity in behalf of a superfluous member of society. Poverty made an outcast of this man. What could a fatherland mean to him? The penny thrown at his feet from glittering carriages was all the bounty he ever obtained from his country. The people who preached to him of the joys of heaven were the very ones who preferred the joys of earth. He was left to console himself with a promissory note payable on some star after death. "Sleep well in your sarcophagus in which they have buried you without a shroud. Even a prince will have no clean shirt on judgment day."

The dead beggar had his counterpart in the living heroine of Herwegh's second social poem "Sick Lizzie." With bitter irony the poet depicted the wife of a poor weaver walking on Christmas eve [56]

The Lyric of Social Pity

through the streets of Paris on her way to a hospital. At home neither bed nor cradle was prepared to receive the fruit of her womb. The rich carousers were celebrating the birth of Christ, the God of the poor, but no tear of pity trickled down their harsh cheeks or into their wine-filled goblets. The suffering mother dragged herself with her last strength to the monument erected in honor of the heroes of the Revolution of 1830 and there gave birth to a child.

It seemed to Herwegh that the social indictment embodied in this poem was bound to make a stir among the literary public, even though this public was gradually growing indifferent to his political verse. He sent a copy of the poem to his fiancée and she voiced her approval of it in enthusiastic language. In a letter of February 8, 1843, she wrote: "You will see that 'Sick Lizzie' and 'Poor Jacob' will find their way to the huts of the poor and if these people are won over, then we may expect the best results. Only from the masses is an Easter to be expected; that it will come and that we shall help to celebrate it is now perfectly clear to me."

Herwegh's social poems were written soon after his unfortunate audience with the Prussian king. The poet, who in 1842 had reached the height of

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

his fame and who during his journey through Germany in that year had been fêted by liberals everywhere, was invited during his stay at Berlin to a private audience with Frederick William IV, a distinction which was not accorded to any other poet of the opposition. A comparison of this meeting with a similar one depicted by Schiller immediately suggested itself to Germans. In the tragedy *Don Carlos* Schiller had described a stirring audience between King Philip II of Spain and the eloquent idealist Marquis Posa, in which the latter had made a memorable plea for political freedom and universal tolerance. It was expected of Herwegh that in his conversation with the Prussian monarch he assume the rôle of a nineteenth century Marquis Posa. Little is known of the meeting which took place at the royal palace on November 19. The king is said to have complimented Herwegh on his lyrics and to have mentioned that he thought highly of an opponent who based his opposition on principles. The embarrassed poet was dismissed before he could say anything of importance or present any controversial matter. The ridiculous outcome of this audience and the censorship of a magazine in which Herwegh had intended to voice his political sentiments induced him to write a letter to the king outlining his [58]

The Lyric of Social Pity

views in an extremely bold manner. As a result he was immediately expelled from Prussia and the newspaper that had made his letter public was suppressed.

This disastrous experience convinced him of the absurdity of expecting vital reforms from above. No ruler would give up his inherited powers. Political and social changes, if they were to come at all, would have to come from the rabble itself. Among the German workers in Switzerland plans for a revolutionary movement were being forged. The tailor Wilhelm Weitling was actively organizing secret societies aiming at the overthrow of the social order. Herwegh, who believed, as the opening of one of his poems proclaimed, that "only out of huts could salvation come for the world," naturally took a keen interest in the radical agitation of the German émigrés. One of his epigrams written at this time was an answer to those who mocked the communists because of their small number.

"Spottet des Völkleins nicht! es hat ja den römischen Adler

Eine geringere Zahl solcher Apostel gestürzt."

Although there is no indication that Herwegh ever became a member of any of Weitling's groups, nevertheless his sympathy with the communist leaders

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

laid him open to suspicion. In 1843 an official investigation into the activities of the secret organizations in Switzerland linked his name with that of the communists in Geneva. He thereupon found it necessary to issue a public declaration of his exact attitude towards the new social doctrines. He conceded that he regarded socialism as a more rational solution of society's ills than conservatism, liberalism, or radicalism; for he believed that the regeneration of the masses would have to come from their own midst and by their own efforts. He considered it no disgrace to associate with the uncorrupted plebeians and was not too proud to learn from them. Nevertheless, he did not wish to be regarded as an adherent of communism, since he was against all conspiracies and did not feel that the sacred cause of the people should be compromised by untimely revolts.

In the same year 1843, Herwegh, who had moved to Paris, successfully resisted the suggestion of his radical friends Arnold Ruge and Karl Marx that their three families found a communistic household or "phalanx" in accordance with the system of Fourier. The experiment entered into by Marx and Ruge after Herwegh's refusal ended in disaster before a fortnight had elapsed.

The Lyric of Social Pity

Five years later, when the Revolution of 1848 broke out, Herwegh thought that the destined hour of political and social emancipation had struck. He left Paris with several hundred exiles under the impression that as soon as he crossed the Rhine thousands would flock to his standard. But when he entered into Baden, the earlier popular enthusiasm for the uprising was on the wane. The indifference of those whom he came to liberate was a severe blow to his ideals. The ridiculous outcome of his gloriously planned expedition embittered his sensitive heart. The naïve singer of freedom became a caustic critic who looked askance at every development in German politics and industry during the next quarter of a century until his death in 1875.

Only for a brief time in 1864 under the stimulating friendship of Ferdinand Lassalle did faith once more flare up within his cankered soul, but with the sudden death of his friend it quickly died down. It was in April of this year that he wrote his best social lyric, the well-known "Song for the German Workers' Confederation." Set to music by Hans von Bülow this poem was sung at labor meetings until the close of the century, and though its popularity has waned considerably during the last generation, it is still to be found in socialistic antholo-

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

gies. In Upton Sinclair's *Cry for Justice*, published in 1915, the most stirring stanzas are reprinted in an English translation.

"Pray and work! proclaims the world:
Briefly pray, for Time is gold.
On the door there knocketh dread—
Briefly pray, for Time is bread.

And ye plow and plant to grow.
And ye rivet and ye sow.
And ye hammer and ye spin—
Say, my people what ye win.

Weave at loom both day and night,
Mine the coal to mountain height:
Fill right full the harvest horn—
Full to brim with wine and corn.

Yet where is thy meal prepared?
Yet where is thy rest-hour shared?
Yet where is thy warm hearth-fire?
Where is thy sharp sword of fire?"

As a social lyrist Herwegh may be placed side by side with Karl Beck. Both poets were born in the same year. Both gained the favor of the public early in their twenties and lost it before they had passed their thirties. In both lyrists the enormous embitterment and the poetic sterility of their later years stood in marked contrast to the overstrained idealism and the rich eloquence of their youth. In [62]

The Lyric of Social Pity

them a generation that was steeped in Weltschmerz became articulate. They first gave emotional expression to the horror that gripped many who saw the irrationality of the new economic and social order with its tremendous technical improvements and its increasing mass misery. They were among the first poets to depict the human wrecks left in the wake of industrial progress. They were the pioneers of a host of lesser writers who in the Forties brought the cause of the proletariat to the attention of the literary public.

CHAPTER V

THE LYRIC OF VICE AND CRIME

THE social lyric in its early stage is a lyric of protest, and as such it necessarily idealizes the lowly and outcast at the expense of the well-fed and dignified members of the community. It has tears of compassion for the beggar who shares his bread with his hungrier neighbor and flaming scorn for the factory lord who feasts while his workers starve. Its deep love for the noble rabble and its keen contempt for the decadent aristocracy give birth to new tones and new poetic types. The lyricist feels that society alone is to blame for all the mortal wrecks entangled in its swamps, for all the golden dreams that never attain fulfillment, for all the human flowers that perish for lack of sunlight. A great pity floods the lyric of the Forties that deals with vice and crime. A mighty protest arises against the unjust standards of law and morality, standards aimed against the hungry and the helpless. Crime is seen but as a necessary consequence of poverty, and sin [64]

The Lyric of Vice and Crime

as a mark of disgrace branded on the forehead of those crushed by society. In the words of the Bohemian poet Alfred Meissner, "man must become a beast of prey, if he is to survive on earth, a sneaking, biting, poisoning, rending beast of prey." The beautiful child that to-day is smiling in innocent slumber will to-morrow have to struggle against the avarice and brutality of society. Care will furrow its young face and anger will eat into its heart. It may go forth to murder and destroy. It may end in jail or on the gallows, without ever being conscious of guilt.

Two paradoxical figures, prominent in the novel of this period, now make their entry into the German lyric. They are the virtuous harlot and the honest criminal, the poor maiden who like Mary Magdalene emerges unsullied from a life of shame and the lost youth who like *Oliver Twist* retains his sense of honor even though living in a den of thieves.

Eugène Sue had popularized these characters in fiction. In glaring colors he had exposed the underworld of the French metropolis. Criminals were visited in their dens, drunkards in their taverns, prostitutes in their cellars, and all those creatures who shun the light of day were closely scrutinized as they

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

shuffled past under the gas jet. The public shuddered as it read scenes more gruesome than any nightmare. A whole flock of native novelists arose who, in imitation of the *Mysteries of Paris*, which was translated into German in 1844, initiated eager readers into the mysteries of Amsterdam, Vienna, Berlin, Hamburg, and other towns harboring a proletariat. Descriptions of murder, pillage, and incest became the order of the day. The struggle of the criminal with the police and of the young girl with the lust of men became the theme for innumerable stories.

The virtuous harlot appealed especially to lyrists, for she best exemplified, on the one hand, the beauty and self-sacrifice that even the dregs of the proletariat harbored, and, on the other hand, the selfishness and cruelty of existing social conditions. The fallen maiden was usually represented as still half a child, pale and timid, patient and trusting. Rags covered her fair limbs, a hunted look gleamed in her eyes, and a blush of shame was on her cheeks. She knew hunger and cold, days of care, nights of terror, and pain, unspeakable pain, such as sensitive souls must feel when wrongly injured and disgraced.

Gustav Freytag best portrayed this new literary type in his poem, "The Harlot," a poem that has [66]

The Lyric of Vice and Crime

not been reprinted since its first appearance in 1845. In the darkness of night a pale girl accosts a passing stranger. He flares up in his superior virtue and bids the daughter of sin be gone. But her timid, stammering words hold him spellbound. He takes her trembling hand and accompanies her through dim streets to her wretched home. She leads him up creaking stairs and asks him to enter. A scene of indescribable misery greets him. He sees a paralyzed and idiotic grandmother, a sick and moaning mother, and a little sister studying biblical proverbs in this abode of sin. The girl throws off her hat and cloak and points with trembling hand to the neighboring room. He shudders at the sound of her voice and at the sight of her face. Suddenly she recognizes him and falls in a swoon at his feet. For, he was her bridegroom of previous, better days, and was even now returning to his old city to fetch his beloved. Soon he learns amidst tears her tale of suffering and sacrifice, and his heart almost breaks with compassion. He promises to return on the following morning in order to release her from her present straits and restore her to happiness. But when he enters her room next day, she lies with a smile of bliss on her face, wrapped in eternal sleep.

In the lyrics that treat of vice, death, either in a

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

natural or a voluntary form, is recognized as the only release from a life of sin. Hermann Püttmann presents a characteristic picture of such a life in his poem, "At the Bier of the Unfortunate." A charming English girl is suddenly impoverished when her father is thrown into bankruptcy and into the debtor's prison. The rich and charitable people who happened to be the creditors of her father come to take all the belongings of her family. Her mother dies of grief. She herself becomes a maid and as such is at the mercy of her master. When he drives her from him, after dishonoring and disgracing her, she succumbs to want and finally gives herself over to lust. Then the rich and charitable men who robbed her father and murdered her mother come to visit her, and she has to bring joy and love to them that deprived her of all joy and all hope of love. Now she is dead and death is surely best for her.

A similar portrait of a young girl hounded by poverty until she submits to vice and ends in death is painted by Georg Weerth in his lyric "Only Eighteen" (1845). The theme was suggested to him by the following paragraph in an English newspaper: "On this bitter night—the hour approaching midnight, a woman sat on a door-step in a London street. Her head had fallen backward against the door, and

[68]

The Lyric of Vice and Crime

her face shone like a white stone in the moonlight. That face had a terrible history in it, cut and lined, as it were, by the twin-workers, vice and misery—her temples were sunken, her brow wrinkled and pinched, her mouth thin and jagged—could it be thought that woman was once a child?” The poet attempts to reconstruct the past history of this life that ended so tragically. He leads us through all its stages from the first dawn of love in the young soul to the grim end in the gutter and closes with a cry of damnation on a society that murders its youth.

The figure of the maiden impelled by necessity to sell her body recurs again in the lyric of Ludwig Köhler, a poet whose name is often met with in the literature of the Forties but who is known to but few to-day. Born at Meiningen in 1819, he first attracted attention when expelled from the University of Leipzig on account of his radical activities as a student. Upon his return to his native town, he became the editor of a journal, which was, however, soon suppressed because of a seditious article. Köhler was imprisoned for several weeks, but apparently failed to reform; for in 1846 he published a volume of verse, entitled *Free Songs*, which contained political lyrics little to the taste of the ruling powers.

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

His social poems are studies in poverty, crime, and vice, all tinged with a vague sentimentality. One of these, entitled "Fair Lizzie," treats of a sixteen year old girl who for a long time resists the gold offered for her charms. However, when her mother falls sick and no savior comes to help them, Lizzie decides to sell what alone can still command gold: her yellow locks, her rosy cheeks, her swan-white neck, her fair young body. But the man she turns to looks into her innocent eyes and is strangely stirred. He gives her a coin, wherewith to purchase food and commends her to the care of God. But hunger recurs every day, and saviors are rarely at hand. Who can say what the end of Lizzie may be? If she escapes death, will she not end in crime?

Such is the fate of the unmarried mother who is led in her distress to strangle her offspring. Infanticide, a favorite theme of "Storm and Stress," now reappears in the lyrics of Franz Dingelstedt, Alfred Meissner, and Ernst Dronke.

In Dronke's *Voices of Poor Sinners* (1845) human waifs parade before us and human derelicts moan in pain. Dronke, who was born at Koblenz in 1822, came to Berlin in the early Forties after having studied law at Bonn and Marburg. At first he intended to prepare himself for an academic

[70]

The Lyric of Vice and Crime

career, but soon he gave up this plan in order to devote himself entirely to literary work. Following the appearance of his first volume of verse, he was expelled from Berlin and immediately thereafter from Leipzig and Dresden. In 1846 he issued a collection of short stories describing the conflicts of virtuous criminals with the police. He showed honest, good-natured husbands and fathers who stole because of hunger, human beings driven to despair by unemployment until they lost all sense of moral values, some that even preferred the certain fare within prison walls to the uncertain doles in their free garrets. While on a visit to his parents at Koblenz, Dronke was arrested on the charge of printing insulting remarks about His Majesty in his book *Berlin* (1846). This description in two volumes of the poverty, crime, and official stupidity that reigned in the Prussian capital aroused the indignation of the authorities and the radical author was sentenced to two years of imprisonment. Early in 1848, he succeeded in making his escape from the fortress of Wesel and in joining Marx and Engels at Brussels.

Social resentment flashes through every poem of Dronke. His heroes are the newly damned inhabitants of the prison, the work-house and the slums.

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

The thief who plunders a bakery, the incendiary who sets his lord's house aflame, the young mother who drowns her newly born babe are not wicked sinners but innocent victims of circumstances. The murderer who is about to pay the extreme penalty for his crimes has no regrets and no desire to change his world for that of his judges. He feels that he was doomed from birth, when exposed by his father, the beggar, and his mother, the harlot. All his diligence could not keep need from his door and all his search for help was vain. Now he is happy to leave this abode of pain and to enter into eternal rest. Other figures cannot, however, escape life's woes so soon. There is the woman who roams through the dimly-lit streets offering her body for sale. At home her children are sitting in the cold little room waiting for the bread that is to be purchased with the wages of sin. She does not care what happens to her father who even in his old days works on without rest; she does not care what fate befalls her mother who struggles on in desperate need; her own children are crying for food and must be fed even at the price of shame.

A more adequate treatment of vice and crime than that afforded by lyric poetry is to be found in the fiction of this period. A host of minor novelists,
[72]

The Lyric of Vice and Crime

among whom are Ernst Willkomm, Louise Otto, and Robert Prutz, portray the immorality and depravity that reigned in communities which were passing through the horrors of transition between domestic and factory production. Tavern scenes are especially in vogue. The multitude that has been liberated from the fangs of machines is often shown squandering its hard-earned coins in disreputable inns, seeking to drown its woes in the unnatural hilarity of brandy, dice, and dancing. The vices of the proletariat are indicated to be a necessary consequence of its position in life. Society is accused of placing its humble members in an environment that must throttle the inherent goodness of their nature. "All who are gathered in the inn know that they are doomed," writes Robert Prutz in his novel *Engelchen*, begun in 1845. "They know right well that their every hour at the machine and their every breath in the putrid factory air gnaw at their life's marrow; nor are they unaware of the fact that a similar fate will overtake their children to whom they can bequeath only poverty, disease, and slavery. Is it not human, yes, the only thing human about them, that they wish to spend the wretched remnant of their life as wildly and as riotously as they can; that they chase madly every pleasure and

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

every sensation, no matter how transitory, trivial, or degrading it may be, providing only that it drugs for a few moments the consciousness of their woes?"

The literature of vice and crime, as hitherto discussed, was characterized by two distinct tones: the sentimental that aimed to evoke pity and the revolutionary that sought to arouse resentment. With Heinrich Heine, this grim subject-matter takes on a new, a burlesque tone. Thus the heroine of his poem "Pomare" (1846), a Parisian grisette, does not meet a pauper's end in a hospital or on the dissecting table of an anatomical laboratory. On the contrary, she who chose sin because she would not overexert herself in honest search for bread became the queen of the half-world, and as such dazzled with her beauty, danced with grace and majesty, and died a natural death in the bloom of life. Similarly in another of Heine's poems, entitled "A Woman," a thief and his villainous consort are quite happy even though the gallows beckon to them. To quote from Louis Untermeyer's masterly translation of this lyric:

"They loved each other beyond belief—
She was a strumpet, he was a thief:
Whenever she thought of his tricks, thereafter
She'd throw herself on the bed with laughter.

The Lyric of Vice and Crime

The day was spent with a reckless zest:
At night she lay upon his breast.
So when they took him, a moment later,
She watched at the window—with laughter.

He sent word pleading, 'Oh come to me,
I need you, need you bitterly,
Yes, here and in the hereafter,'
Her little head shook with laughter.

At six in the morning they swung him high;
At seven the turf on his grave was dry;
At eight, however, she quaffed her
Red wine and sang with laughter!"

The burlesque tone was not, however, the only one at the command of Heine in the treatment of the complex problems of vice and crime. More than any other poet of his generation, he was conscious of the moral devastations caused by the economic changes; deeper than others, he penetrated into the intricacies of the new social phenomena. A knowledge of his attitude towards society from his early period of Messianic radicalism to his last cynical phase is essential for an understanding of the social and industrial literature of the nineteenth century. We must, therefore, now turn our attention to Heine, and begin with that stage of his development in which he was the outstanding representative of the Utopian lyric.

CHAPTER VI

THE LYRIC OF SOCIAL UTOPIAS

THE decade of the March Revolution is a skeptical decade. The immense changes in the physical environment are accompanied by a no less startling transformation in the spiritual life. Established religious creeds cease to have an important influence on the thought of the younger writers. The quasi-materialistic philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach and the radical theology of David Friedrich Strauss are accepted without much questioning by many of the newer poets. With the fading of belief in traditional doctrines there comes a greater faith in man's unmeasured powers. The railroad that proclaims the conquest of time, the steam-engine that lures mysterious energy from nature, the loom that does the work of a multitude of hands, these and similar inventions open new vistas to the human imagination. Poets dream of a time when the last mysteries will be revealed, when man who made God in his image will dethrone his created idol and transport the kingdom of heaven to earth.

The Lyric of Social Utopias

A new humanitarianism arises. The brotherhood of man is no longer justified on the ground of a common descent from God, the All-Father, but on the ground of common work and common suffering. Other-worldliness loses whatever grip it still retained upon the minds of men. Lack of faith in life after death, a corollary of the dominant materialistic philosophy, leads to a greater valuation of life on earth. The mere act of living comes to be regarded as the highest possible good, the mere continuance of breathing as the most precious of ideals. The words of Achilles are quoted with approval, words spoken by the dead hero to the far-wandering Odysseus, that it were better to subsist as the humblest of mortals than to rule as the lord of the underworld. The feeling prevails that all men are equal, for all men walk in the shadow of death on the brink of annihilation. Human beings thus favored or doomed seem to have an innate right to a maximum amount of joy in this world. This belief in the moral worth of pleasure is best summed up in a doctrine first popularized in France by Enfantin, a disciple of St. Simon, and transplanted across the Rhine by the writers of Young Germany, the doctrine of the rehabilitation of the flesh.

St. Simonism, as developed by its founder in the

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

eventful decades following the French Revolution of 1789, aimed to establish both a new social order and a new religion. No longer was work to be regarded as a punishment inflicted by God upon man because of the sins of our first parents. On the contrary, work was in itself often a source of joy and could become in a properly organized society the means of attaining universal bliss. Unlike the laissez-faire economists who based their theories upon the fiction of the economic man, an ideal individual impelled solely by enlightened egoism, St. Simon saw in the social instinct the driving force in human conduct. Every worker was a creator who enriched his fellow-men with the product of his toil. This enrichment of society by the labor of all its members was bound to proceed at an increasing pace concurrent with the industrialization of Europe. Unfortunately, however, governments were so organized that the enormous wealth flowed into the coffers of a few while the masses subsisted on starvation wages. A small minority of beings favored by birth and position subverted to its private use the vast resources that could, if properly apportioned, bring happiness to all men. A change in the manner of distribution was necessary. The nobleman and the priest must give way to the engineer and the entrepreneur.

[78]

The Lyric of Social Utopias

A hierarchy of talent must take the place of the old aristocracy. New scientific discoveries must be put at the disposal of the entire community. Religion must set up as its aim the establishment of a golden age in which the exploitation of one person by another should cease and everyone be free to develop his talents without hindrance. Woman must become the equal of man not merely in name but also in fact. Finally, the separation of body and soul must yield to a joyful acceptance of the divinity of both. It is this last doctrine to which Prosperè Enfantin applied the catchword: the rehabilitation of the flesh.

With what enthusiasm is this new hedonistic formula received! What dreams of social Utopias does it arouse in the minds of poets! Whosoever is captivated by its lure no longer pleads merely for simple human rights or for the alleviation of distress but clamors loudly, as Heine does, for "nectar and ambrosia, purple robes and costly perfumes, lust, splendor, music, comedy, and the dance of laughing nymphs." "Yes, it will be a splendid day," writes Heine, "when the sun of liberty makes the earth warmer and happier than all the stars of the aristocracy put together; a new generation will spring up begotten in freedom and love, not in con-

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

straint and the control of publicans and priests; born in freedom men will come into the world with thoughts and feelings so free, that we who are born slaves have no idea of them. Oh! they will little know how horrible was the night, in the darkness of which we had to live, and how cruelly we were forced to fight against hideous ghosts, and shrieking owls, and sanctimonious sinners! O, the poor struggling wretches that we are, compelled to waste our lifetime in such a fight, so that we are weary and pale when the day of victory dawns! The glow of the sunrise will no longer color our cheeks and our hearts will never more be kindled into warmth; we pass and die away like the waning moon. All too short is the way of man's pilgrimage, and at the end of it lies the inexorable grave."

Heinrich Heine is the leader of the St. Simonian cult in Germany and his ardent championship of the religious and social doctrines of the French thinker accounts in large measure for their vogue in the Thirties and Forties.

Heine was by far the greatest social lyricist of his generation. In him we learn to know not a chance figure such as often crops up on the literary horizon to enchant with sweet lyrics or sparkle with scintillating wit or add works of art

[80]

The Lyric of Social Utopias

to a language rich in masterpieces. On the contrary, we encounter in him the prophet of a nation at the turning point of its political development—the German nation as it neared the end of its thousand year old struggle for unification; we see in him the embodiment of a most paradoxical age—an age suckled in outworn medieval forms and dreaming of liberation through science and industrialism; we behold in him the pioneer of a race at a crisis in its history—the Jewish race as it burst forth from the Ghetto clamoring for knowledge and joy and power long withheld from it; and finally we discover in him the best personification of the jagged modern soul, torn with unanswered doubts, wrestling with despair, complex beyond analysis, and hypersensitive to the point of morbidity.

Three strong influences shape Heine's character and thereby determine to a large extent his attitude towards society. They are the Jewish, the German, and the French.

His race is his fate, the cause of his greatness, and the origin of his tragedy. Ever he seeks to escape from it. Ever he returns to it. Now he flees from its ascetic severity to the flesh-pots of a gay world, and now, filled with remorse, he retreats to seek refuge in its stern sereneness. In him East meets

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

West, the Orient clashes with the Occident, nay more, in him Jerusalem, Athens, Berlin, and Paris struggle for supremacy. He is the frail vessel that must break under a great mission. He is the Jew awakened from his medieval dreams who in his mad haste to adjust himself to the modern world oversteps himself and rushes on without halt or pause for breath until he finds himself alone on the threshold of the twentieth century, just as much out of harmony with his neighbors, just as little understood by his contemporaries as ever before.

Upon this Jewish sub-stratum is superimposed the heritage of a great cultural nation. All the intellectual and emotional currents that sweep over Germany from the close of the skeptical eighteenth century to the idealistic revolution of the mid-nineteenth century exercise a profound influence upon him. Düsseldorf—the town of his birth, Hamburg—the city of his tragic love affair, Frankfort—the seat of his brief business career, and Munich—the artistic capital of Bavaria, introduce him to varying aspects of German spiritual life. At the Rhenish university of Bonn he falls in 1819 under the spell of August Wilhelm Schlegel, the famous historian of the world's literature and one of the founders of the Romantic Movement. At Berlin [82]

The Lyric of Social Utopias

from 1821 on he joins the disciples of Hegel, the idolized philosopher of academic youth. Romanticism with its reverence for the Middle Ages, nascent modern Realism with its devotion to the present, Messianic radicalism with its vision of a Utopian future, Weltschmerz, pantheistic optimism, and the deepest tones of social cynicism—all find responsive chords in his personality. Heine experiences Germany in all its phases. If his manner of reacting is Jewish, the situations to which he reacts are German. If again his method of approach towards reality is Jewish, the facts of reality with which he grapples and about which his activities circle again are German. Perhaps we may say that the steel beams upon which the structure of his personality rests are Jewish, but the structure itself is German—and the polish that adds color and beauty to this structure is French.

The French influence is not so deep-rooted as the others, yet it is present in him and about him from his birth to his tragic collapse. Düsseldorf, his native city, now famed as the metropolis of the Rhenish-Westphalian industry but known in 1797 merely as the capital of the small duchy of Jülich-Berg, a duchy ruled over by the Elector of the Palatinate, is dominated throughout Heine's childhood

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

and youth by French troops, French administrators, and French culture. Under the régime of Napoleon serfdom is abolished in the Rhineland, a modern civil code is introduced, the Jews are liberated from century-old disabilities and raised to a position of equality with their neighbors. Young Heine looks with adoration upon the imperial miracle-worker who with a stroke of the pen made and unmade kingdoms, and idealizes him in one of his earliest ballads: "The Grenadiers." The Prussian régime that follows that of Napoleon and that attempts to undo the reforms effected by the Emperor serves further to strengthen Heine's belief in the mission of France as the torch-bearer of liberalism and democracy. Especially after the Revolution of 1830 Paris becomes for him the new Jerusalem and in its walls he spends the last twenty-five years of his life. The French influence on Heine not only enriches his intellectual life but also colors his art. It accounts for the astounding lucidity of his style and the brilliancy of his wit. Yet we cannot possibly assign as much importance to it as we do to the German or the Jewish influence in the shaping of his personality and of his art.

In so far as Heine's character is a composite of conflicting elements his reactions towards the prob-
[84]

The Lyric of Social Utopias

lems of life are bound to be varied and at times contradictory. Yet there is one common note that runs through all his creative work and that is: his deep disgust with the business attitude towards life.

As early as 1824 in his *Journey to the Harz*, he divides human beings into business-men and artists, or, to use his terminology, philistines and students. The philistines are wise people who can manipulate figures, calculate profits, amass fortunes, who look upon the entire world from the standpoint of utility, and who seek a practical application for all creation including sun, moon, and stars. Though they are regarded as successful, they are really without joy in life, for the beautiful and the magnificent do not form an essential part of their existence. Forest and brook, mountain and nightingale are not alive for them. Only the child of nature, the artist or student knows true joy. He may be without money or property, but then he is also without practical cares or business worries. Nature is for him an open book in which he can read the secret of creation. He gets away from black dresscoats and silken stockings, from soft embraces and oily speeches; he climbs the mountains where simple huts are standing, where mighty pine trees tower, where birds and brooks are forever singing. There his heart expands and, look-

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

ing down upon the polished folk and their polished manners, he bursts into laughter and song.

Even before the publication of the *Journey to the Harz*, Heine's antagonistic attitude towards the well-fed class of shopkeepers found poetic expression in his tragedy *Ratcliff* (1822). There he predicts a growing cleavage between rich and poor and divides human beings into two nations, the sleek and the lean, that are eternally at war with each other. In embittered verses he gives vent to the rage aroused by the sight of rascals parading in luxury, looking down from golden chariots upon the poverty-stricken man who might even then be trudging with his last shirt to a pawnshop. The poet heaps his scorn upon the laws fashioned by the wise and prosperous people to protect themselves against the attack of the howling, overburdened, and undernourished plebeians. However, though judges and gibbets await those who dare break through the wall of laws that shield the opulent, nevertheless there are some who do not fear the risk and who dare defy the established order.

In 1827 Heine comes to know the vanguard of the new industrial régime. A first hand acquaintance with conditions in England helps to confirm his belief in the inevitability of coming social conflicts.
[86]

The Lyric of Social Utopias

In London he is appalled by the complexity and cruelty of a great metropolis, by the dreary uniformity of its tenements, and by the mad pace of its inhabitants. In one of his reports to Germany he writes in 1828:

“I have seen the greatest marvel that the world can reveal to the astonished spirit; I have seen it and am still dumbfounded; still this stony forest of houses stares at me, a forest through which courses a stream of living human faces, each impelled by varied passions, lashed by love and hunger and hate—I speak of London.

“Send a philosopher to London—not a poet! Send a philosopher and place him at a corner of Cheapside. He will learn more here than from all the books of the last Leipzig fair. As the human waves whirl about him, a sea of new thoughts will arise before him; the eternal spirit that floats overhead will inspire him; the deepest secrets of the social order will suddenly be revealed to him; he will distinctly see and hear the pulse of the world. For, if London is the right hand of the world, the active, mighty right hand, then the thoroughfare leading from the stock-exchange to Downing Street must be regarded as the pulse of the world.

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

“But send no poet to London ! This all-embracing seriousness, this terrible sameness, this machine-like activity, this peevishness of even joy itself, this hustling, bustling London oppresses the imagination and breaks the heart.”

Life in such a metropolis is a never-ceasing struggle for survival, a struggle which brings opulence and dignity to but few and which dooms the many to rags and tears. Seventeen years before Friedrich Engels recorded his impressions of proletarian existence in England, Heine sketched in vivid colors scenes of vice, crime, and misery in the slums of London. He found more of true humanity among the outcast than among the cool, calculating, virtuous citizens who felt neither the force of evil nor the power of goodness. It seemed to him that among the poor, crime was not really crime nor was vice the offspring of a wicked heart. On the contrary, he could point to women upon whose cheeks red vice was painted but in whose breasts celestial purity dwelt. For a time indeed he devoutly believed in the theory of the noble proletariat, a theory that made him amenable to the doctrines of St. Simon and that he sloughed off as soon as he lost faith in these doctrines.

The Lyric of Social Utopias

Just as the eighteenth century dreamed of the noble savage whose primitive goodness and innocence was a standing rebuke to an over-civilized Europe, even so did the nineteenth century dream of a rejuvenation of society at the hands of its uncorrupted lower classes. We have seen that this precisely was the faith of the poets of Weltschmerz and that they often sought to escape from gloom in visions of coming social Utopias.

Undoubtedly the greatest master of the Utopian lyric was the English poet Shelley. A survey of his influence upon German literature during the last hundred years seems to indicate that it was the social lyric of the Forties that was most profoundly affected by his muse. At the opening of that decade Friedrich Engels translated *Queen Mab*, the earliest of Shelley's Utopian poems, and in the same year Alfred Meissner rendered *Alastor* into German. By 1844 the complete works of Shelley as then known, were in the hands of German readers in the versions of Julius Seybt, Ludwig Herrig, and Ferdinand Prössel. Lyric tributes were lavished upon the English poet by Georg Herwegh, Alfred Meissner, Moritz Hartmann, Rudolph Gottschall, C. A. Schloenbach, and Wilhelm Zimmermann. Young Engels wrote his poem of a coming millennium, entitled

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

"An Evening," under the influence of Shelley. Similarly young Meissner imitated the Messianic dreamer in several social lyrics.

But a more potent spell than the English poet could exercise emanated, as we have seen, from the lyric prophecies of the French singer Béranger. His vision of a holy alliance of peoples to replace the holy alliance of tyrants made a strong appeal to the victims of the Metternich régime. His idealization of St. Simon, Fourier, and Enfantin paved the way for the missionary work of their German literary disciples.

Heine's preoccupation with the ideas of the French social thinkers dates from his arrival in Paris soon after the Revolution of 1830. His first few months in exile brought him in contact with Michel Chevalier, Olinde Rodrigues, and Prosper Enfantin, three prominent leaders of the St. Simonian school. His correspondence with Rahel Varnhagen deals with the ideas evolved by this group. He was an eye-witness of the growth and the decline of the various sects, and in numerous articles he called the attention of Germans to the new religion and the new social philosophy that stirred their western neighbors. The economic aspect of St. Simonism, as developed by Bazard, interested him less than the

[90]

The Lyric of Social Utopias

moral implications as deduced by *Enfantin*, to whom indeed he dedicated the first edition of his book *De l'Allemagne*.

Heine, who in his youth had proclaimed that all men were noblemen, was attracted to a social gospel that sought to bring to all human beings the joys that formerly belonged to a privileged group. In his treatise *The Romantic School* (1833), he thus formulated his new faith:

"We have measured all lands and weighed the powers of nature; we have calculated the resources of industry and, behold, we have discovered that this earth is large enough for all, that it offers sufficient room for everyone to build his home of joy thereon, that it can nourish all of us adequately if we all work and no one lives at the expense of another, and finally that it is unnecessary to direct the larger and poorer class to heaven."

In Heine's opinion, the great crime of the past consisted in the exploitation of the masses for the benefit of a clergy and an aristocracy of birth. The teaching of Christianity had made this exploitation possible by extolling renunciation of worldly goods and by glorifying the spirit at the expense of the flesh. Perhaps asceticism was a good antidote for the orgies of later antiquity. Perhaps a hunger cure,

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

such as prescribed by the Church, was necessary after the banquet of a Trimalkion. However, the Nazarene régime that arose after the Bacchic revels of the late Roman Empire had died down and the bestiality of the northern barbarians had been tamed, was equally vicious and worthy of condemnation. For joy came to be regarded as sinful and this beautiful garden of God as a vale of tears. The impossibility of being wholly spirit gave birth to hypocrisy. The acceptance of humility as an ideal enabled unscrupulous despots more easily to impose their yoke upon multitudes.

The Revolution of 1789 sounded the knell of the old order, but the fruits of victory fell into the lap of the bourgeoisie. Even the Revolution of 1830 was fought for the benefit of the middle class which turned out to be no less egoistic than the nobility and the clergy. Long enough have the masses bled for others. Victories have brought the common folk nothing save remorse and greater need. But the time has at last come when the millions would fight for themselves and demand their well-earned reward. Should a tempest again arise and should the people again seize weapons, then they would no longer listen to the old lullaby of renunciation chanted to them by priests and parasites. A
[92]

The Lyric of Social Utopias

new and better song would ring in their ears, a song of the kingdom of heaven on earth.

"I will write you a new, a sweeter song;
You shall sing it without a quaver;
We will build the kingdom of heaven on earth—
'Tis a better plan and a braver.

"We shall then be happy and starve no more;
We whom the earth was spoiled for;
No longer shall lazy bellies waste
What busy hands have toiled for.

"Oh, here below there's not only food
In abundance for every comer,
But beauty and pleasure and lollipops,
And the myrtle and rose of summer.

"The sugar plums, as soon as they're ripe,
Shall to each and all be given,
And angels and sparrows may have our share
Of the vague delights of heaven.

"And if after death our wings should sprout,
We'll pay you a visit with pleasure,
And help you to eat your tarts and cakes,
And similar laid up treasure."

Yet, as Heine in 1844 sang of this better world, he knew it to be no more than a Utopia existing only in his own mind. His contact with the radical leaders who sponsored the cause of the German proletariat convinced him that the order they imaged

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

was not one in which he, the priest of Venus and Apollo, could feel comfortable. By 1844 the St. Simonian agitation had subsided and its place had been usurped by democratic and communistic apostles who scorned all faith in a hierarchy of talent such as Heine sought to substitute for the old nobility and the old clergy. Before the close of 1844 he had become the social cynic and the prophet of doom whom we shall learn to know in a later chapter.

The siren lure of a Utopia, that for a time held Heine in its thrall, continued to captivate poets and dreamers of the Eighteen-Forties. There was Karl Beck who in his poem "Resurrection" revelled in vague visions of a social and political rebirth. There was Alfred Meissner who in his lyric "Reconciliation" foresaw the cessation of hostility between classes and the union of all men in a universal brotherhood. There was Georg Weerth, the poet of Detmold, considered by Franz Mehring to be the only imitator of the inimitable Heine who could vivify the master's forms with a new spirit. In a poem, entitled "Industry," Weerth eulogized industry as the new goddess who tamed the elements, subdued space, and performed miracles undreamed of. It was true that millions fell as victims of this god-

[94]

The Lyric of Social Utopias

dess and that as yet but few shared in her blessings. But the future would right the wrongs of the past and the present. The products of human toil would belong not to some but to all. The machine would ultimately prove to be the great liberator of the chained human spirit.

While, however, industry was being thus hailed as the panacea for all social troubles, it was rapidly bringing to the fore new ills which led men to question the desirability of the novel methods of production. In 1844 events were taking place in Germany which rudely shocked all dreamers of idle dreams. The fourth estate, that lyrists were nursing with tears of tender pity and comforting with visions of sweet bliss, suddenly burst forth from dank nooks and dark kennels, barking for bread and howling for vengeance. The revolt of the Silesian weavers in 1844, the first class-conscious act of the German proletariat, lent tragic depth and clear vigor to the social lyric that until then had been pale and hazy.

CHAPTER VII

THE CLIMAX OF THE EARLY SOCIAL LYRIC

WHEN Gerhart Hauptmann in 1892 dramatized the struggle of the Silesian weavers, he was but reviving a theme that had once occupied the attention of poets, novelists, and dramatists, and that had left its deepest impress upon the social lyric of the Forties.

In all countries the spinners and the weavers were the first representatives of the fourth estate whose fate of necessity had to take a tragic turn with the introduction of machines. Their riots at Nottingham in 1811 and in Lyons in 1831 were virtually the first important labor strikes in England and in France. At no time did the average textile worker earn more than was barely necessary to keep body and soul together. In Germany, he was known even in folk-song as a lean and hungry figure. However, as long as spinning and weaving were carried on only in winter, when work in the fields was impossible or else in other seasons by women and children,

[96]

The Climax of the Early Social Lyric

while the men tilled the soil, they supplied a welcome additional though meager source of income. But if through some misfortune the peasant lost his petty plot of ground and was forced to depend solely upon spindle or loom to eke out a living, then his fate was indeed harsh. Year after year he would have to toil from dawn until late into the night, and even on Sundays and holidays he could allow himself no rest. His energies were quickly sapped, his senses dulled; his health undermined. The beauties of earth and sky, of sunset and spring were non-existent for him. Brandy and religion were his only sources of comfort, and when these failed him, bitterness cankered his soul. In the closing decade of the eighteenth century, when the irreverent doctrines of the French Revolution were in the air, he too was stirred to action. The Silesian weaver riots of March, 1793, were, however, quickly suppressed, and the rebels so thoroughly cowed that for fully half a century no further disorders were feared. Besides, the ruthless censorship in force during the reign of Frederick William III prevented the knowledge of the pitiable conditions in the Silesian villages from reaching the ears of the general public.

When, however, Frederick William IV ascended the throne of Prussia in 1840 and a wave of liberal-

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

ism for a moment swept the country, the newspapers began to print reports of the almost indescribable misery among the weavers. These reports increased in number and in bitterness, as the early liberal promises of the monarch failed to bear fruit. Relief societies sprang up in Breslau, Berlin, and various parts of the Rhineland. Considerable sums began to flow into the coffers of the central organization in the Silesian capital. But what could these avail in the face of the almost indescribable need embracing approximately 50,000 families or 200,000 persons? In an extensive investigation undertaken early in 1844 by Regierungsassessor Alexander Schnee in behalf of the Breslau society, details of suffering were brought to light that seemed almost unbelievable. In some of the villages visited, Schnee did not find even a single storekeeper, for no one had money to spend for purchases. The streets were deserted and hardly any children were to be seen playing in the open, since from the tender age of four they had to assist their parents at the spinning wheel. Not even the barking of dogs was to be heard anywhere, for these had been devoured by their hungry masters. An old weaver told Schnee of his great fortune in having once discovered two horses that had died in his vicinity, and how for a [98]

The Climax of the Early Social Lyric

long time his family fed upon this choice meat. One couple had sought out and eaten the loaf of bread, which, in accordance with an old superstition, it had concealed on its wedding day six years earlier.

The complaints of the weavers were directed less against unemployment than against starvation wages. A journalist reported that he often encountered poor creatures who had tramped for miles through storm and snow in order to bring their linen packs to the manufacturer. Their return was anxiously awaited by wives and children who had eaten nothing for days save perhaps potato soup. The workers had to accept whatever price was offered, for they did not dare to return to their moaning families with empty hands.

While industry thus cast its blight upon one of Germany's fairest provinces, the government of Berlin, adhering faithfully to the doctrines of the English economists and to the principle of laissez-faire, remained obdurate to all demands for intervention. It was strengthened in its attitude by a memorandum sent to the king in May, 1844, by Merckel, the governor of Silesia, who reported that the distress among the weavers was no greater than in previous years and that the outcry in the press was totally unjustified. To be sure, charitable assistance was desirable.

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

But it had been equally necessary ten years earlier and would no doubt be helpful for another decade until the transition from hand to machine production would be completed. This report was heartily welcomed in Berlin, since it calmed whatever apprehensions might have been entertained in official quarters. For by now, signs were on the increase that the meek paupers were becoming restless. Though few of them read newspapers, nevertheless the knowledge that their suffering was exciting the interest of the outer world served to make them more conscious of their wrongs. The daily humiliations to which they were subjected seemed to knit an invisible bond between them. A new sense of solidarity and hence of strength seemed to arise among them. Their helpless curses became menacing; their unorganized threats took on a more dangerous form. A poem flared up in their midst, the only known folk song of the German proletariat before the middle of the nineteenth century. Sung to a popular melody, it was quickly transmitted from mouth to mouth, stirring to flames the embers of revolt. Hate revived in hearts long numb with despair, anger flashed again from sunken eyes, while cries for blood shot forth from bloodless lips.

The Climax of the Early Social Lyric

This poem which has been characterized as the Marseillaise of the weavers, boded ill for those under whose windows it was sung or whistled in the months of May and June, 1844. Had its threats been heeded by the industrial lords, perhaps the riots that broke out in the latter month might have been avoided. However, no one seriously believed that the docile workers, who for decades had submitted to humiliation and mistreatment without audible protest, would suddenly develop into fierce rebels. Surely, the firm of Zwanziger Brothers in Peterstal, the prototype of Hauptmann's Dreissiger, anticipated no resistance when it announced that, in order to offer employment to three hundred additional men, women, and children, it was compelled to make a further reduction in wages. The weavers did indeed complain that the pay was already far too low and that the new reduction, coupled with the rise in the price of bread and potatoes, would soon make it impossible to buy even the barest necessities. But as their only alternative was unemployment they had to submit to the inhuman dictates of their superiors. So sure were Zwanziger Brothers of their control over their subordinates that, it was rumored, a member of the firm taunted the weavers

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

with the suggestion that if bread or potatoes proved too dear a luxury, they might try to eat grass, for of that food there was plenty to be had.

The folk-song had already referred to Messrs. Zwanziger as executioners who flayed their workers alive. But it had also included in its denunciation other establishments such as those of Dierig, Fellmann, Hofrichter Brothers, and Kamlot-Langer. However, while these gradually disappeared from the public eye, the first named firm seemed to gain in notoriety until it came to be used as the symbol for the merciless employing class. Curiously enough, it was not at all in literature but rather in the pictorial arts that Mr. Zwanziger first attracted wide attention. The earliest painting of the German proletariat dealt with a scene in his office. It was completed in the spring of 1844 by Karl Hübner, an artist of the Düsseldorf School, and was exhibited in Cologne in July of the same year under the title, *The Silesian Weavers*, arousing considerable interest because of its realistic subject matter.

Two rooms are visible on the canvas: the larger one, at the right, appears to be the depository to which the weavers bring their linen, while the smaller one, to the left, is probably the office of the owner. The furnishing and the decoration of the

[102]

The Climax of the Early Social Lyric

latter reveal a luxury and a splendor beyond the most fantastic dreams of a working-man. Through a heavy silk curtain, which serves in place of a door to connect the two rooms and which has been drawn back, the eye catches sight of rich, dark-red tapestry, ostentatious furniture, and a pompous display of clocks, busts, and pictures. At a table a man is sitting, apparently absorbed in his work. A servant is walking off with a linen pack on his back. The splendor of this room extends partly beyond the threshold, for rich carpets lead from it out into the larger anterior one. On these stand two tables with costly linens, and it is in the space in front of these tables that the tragic central theme is presented.

Poor weavers have brought their work for inspection and for payment. The young, elegantly dressed junior member of the firm, a cigar in his hand, leans carelessly on one of the door posts. A cold, bored expression flits over his features and seems to carry the conviction that the wretched business at hand could not be conducted in a more humane fashion. At the table, further to the foreground, stands a stout, arrogant man, the senior Mr. Zwanziger, as may be safely deduced from the figure twenty embroidered on the handkerchief which peers out of his coat pocket. He has just finished inspecting a

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

pack of linen which for some reason he has failed to approve; and now with a frigid gesture he throws it at the feet of the poor worker. The latter pleads desperately for a reconsideration of the harsh sentence; his wife sinks to the ground in a swoon; a young boy, thoroughly frightened, clings to the unconscious body of the mother. However, all remonstrances are vain and earn only scorn instead of pity. In the background is still another member of the firm, busy with a magnifying glass inspecting linen. A middle aged weaver and a boy follow his every glance with intense anxiety, for now the momentous judgment is to be rendered. Further to the right, in the center of the picture, stands a group of weavers. A youth who has just received his pay is showing it to two old men and an old woman, who apparently agree in finding it insufficient. They wring their hands and look up towards heaven in deep anguish and utter helplessness. Two other groups are visible at the right side of the picture. One consists of an old man, his daughter, and his grandchild, all of whom are sitting on a box which probably contains their linen pack. While waiting for their turn, they regard their fellow workers with eager interest, as if trying to discover from the ex-

[104]

The Climax of the Early Social Lyric

periences of others the fate that is soon to overtake them. Near the exit stand two men who are on the point of leaving. Their sacks contain rejected linen which they are taking home. Their angry gestures indicate that the pay they received must have been far from sufficient. One clenches his fist in rage; the other raises his emaciated hand to heaven as though he wished to call down the curse of God. These figures are prophetic of the hundreds whom despair soon armed and sent forth to wreck the proud Zwan'ziger mansion.

It was on the third of June, 1844, that the disorders began at Peterswaldau. Mr. Zwanziger was then sitting in his luxurious home, comfortably ensconced in an armchair, when suddenly he heard the shuffling of weary feet on the pavement and the hoarse singing of angry throats beneath his windows:

The justice to us weavers dealt
Is bloody, cruel, and hateful;
Our life's one torture, long drawn out;
For lynch law we'd be grateful.

Stretched on the rack day after day,
Hearts sick and bodies aching;
Our heavy sighs their witness bear
To spirit slowly breaking.

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

The Zwanziger true hangsmen are,
Dierigs no whit behind them,
Masters and men with one accord
Set on the poor to grind them.

You villains all, you brood of Hell,
You fiends in fashion human,
A curse will fall on all like you,
Who prey on man and woman.

The suppliant knows he asks in vain,
Vain every word that's spoken.
"If not content, then go and starve—
Our rules cannot be broken."

Then think of all our woe and want,
O ye who hear this ditty!
Our struggles vain for daily bread
Hard hearts would move to pity.

But pity's what *you've* never known
You'd take both skin and clothing,
You cannibals, whose cruel deeds
Fill all good men with loathing.

The manufacturer turned purple with rage as he listened to the impudent verses and he thundered forth a command to his servants to disperse the idlers and to seize their leaders. One weaver was caught, manhandled, and turned over to a gendarme. In vain did his fellows demand his release and threaten forceful measures. That night Mr. Zwanziger slept in peace, feeling that the mischievous spirits among
[106]

The Climax of the Early Social Lyric

his employees must have been cowed by his display of power. Meanwhile the hovels of his workers seethed with excitement. Word of the latest happenings penetrated even the remotest corners of the village and ate into the hearts of men, women and children.

The next day the riots broke out. Before the Zwanziger factory a group of haggard weavers marched quietly up and down. They had just presented their demands for increased pay and were awaiting the outcome. At about three o'clock in the afternoon an answer came that inflamed even the breast of the meekest. Within a few minutes stones were hurled against the manufacturer's house. All the window panes were smashed, and through these temporary openings the bolder spirits among the workers entered the building. Then the work of destruction commenced. Costly linens were cut up amid savage outcries or thrown into the deep ditch that surrounded the house. Furniture was smashed; china was broken; gold and precious objects were carried off. The sole policeman of the town was helpless. The pastor arrived at the scene of destruction when it was already well under way and admonished the crowd to desist from its godless work. Strangely enough, his request was heeded and the

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

majority quietly dispersed. The Zwanziger family, that had hitherto been in hiding, now succeeded in making its escape. But by eight o'clock, the inflaming stanzas of the weaver song were again heard on the streets of Peterswaldau. Emboldened by its first success, the crowd re-formed and again marched to the Zwanziger establishment in order to demolish it completely. Bottles and barrels of wine were found in the cellar and quickly emptied. Joy reigned at last in the long depressed community. Yet some there were who thought anxiously of the coming days and of the heavy retribution to be meted out by the state for this attack upon property.

On the following morning, that of June fifth, the work of destruction was continued until nothing was left of the Zwanziger house but the bare walls. The firms of Fellmann and of Hofrichter Brothers, fearing that a similar fate might befall them at the hands of their aroused employees, sought to allay their dangerous mood by distributing money among them. The manufacturer Wagenknecht, who lived near Zwanziger and who was known for his fair treatment, was not only unmolested but was even given an ovation.

From Peterswaldau the crowd of weavers, now three hundred strong, marched under a red flag to
[108]

The Climax of the Early Social Lyric

Langenbielau, a neighboring village of about ten thousand inhabitants. Here the factories of Hilbert and Andretzki and of Dierig were attacked and plundered. No respect was paid to Pastor Seiffert, Dierig's son-in-law, who is said to have been thrown into the river by the irreverent crowd and then rescued by pious souls. This pastor was believed to have received a dowry of twenty thousand Thaler from his wealthy father-in-law and thereafter to have specialized in preaching the blessings of poverty.

Meanwhile a hurried call had been sent out for troops to restore order. By noon two companies of infantry arrived at Peterswaldau, but on finding that the weavers had gone on to Langenbielau, followed their trail and came upon them as they were about to attack a second factory of Dierig. Major von Rosenberger, commanding the vanguard of about thirty men, took up a position near the entrance to the establishment and called upon the rioters to disperse. Instead of obeying this order, the weavers, who a few minutes earlier had been promised money if they would cease their attack, crowded ever closer upon the handful of soldiers, not at first in a hostile spirit but more probably in order to present their viewpoint to these newcomers.

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

The major, who feared the effect of this fraternizing upon the morale of his troop, ordered a volley to be fired over the heads of the crowd. This was the first time since the days of Napoleon that the inhabitants of the peaceful village saw bullets flying and heard the sound of firearms. Old men recalled the glorious days of their youth when they marched forth under the Prussian banner to battle for freedom. Now they were again under fire. Was this the beginning of a new and a more desperate war for liberation? A frenzied flame gleamed in their eyes. Their weak hands wielded clubs. Stones answered bullets. The soldiers were forced to fire repeatedly into the infuriated mob but in a few minutes they had to retreat before it, not however before killing eleven and wounding twenty-four.

It is now impossible to determine whether the first shot rang out prematurely or whether bloodshed might not have been avoided. The government naturally exonerated the military forces and put all the blame on the rebellious weavers. Radical periodicals, on the contrary, accused the authorities of unnecessary cruelty in quelling the riots.

The scene of the fighting presented a gruesome appearance. Limbs and brains littered the streets. A woman who had been standing at the door of her

[110]

The Climax of the Early Social Lyric

house was shot while looking on. A mother of six children died of wounds received in the battle. A girl was struck down by a stray bullet while on her way to school. A wife who saw her husband killed climbed to the garret of her home and hanged herself. A boy of eight was shot in the knee. A later report that one of the soldiers recognized his own brother in the weaver he had shot must probably be relegated to the realm of fiction. Nor are the rumors which afterwards cropped up to be believed, that among the soldiers there were some who refused to fire on their own countrymen.

On the morning of June sixth three companies of infantry, a squad of artillery, and somewhat later a detachment of cavalry arrived in Langenbielau. Deathlike quiet reigned in the village. No attempt was made at resistance. The weavers who could be identified as having participated in the riots were arrested and carried off in chains to Schweidnitz, where an extraordinary tribunal was set up to try the offenders. According to one report, the accuracy of which can not be vouched for, the number of those arrested mounted up to one hundred, of whom about eighty were condemned, some of them to long terms of imprisonment.

The news of the uprising did not reach Berlin un-

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

til June tenth. Varnhagen von Ense tells in his diary under this and the following dates that great excitement reigned at court. Each minister thought he would flatter the king most by inveighing against the infamous rebels and by demanding the severest penalties for their crime. The newspapers were at first forbidden to print full reports of the disorders with the result that wild rumors of an imminent revolution began to circulate. Public opinion was almost unanimously on the side of the weavers. Relief societies were stimulated to increase their efforts and to solicit contributions from abroad as well as from home. Yet in spite of the universal sympathy little was done—perhaps little could be done—to arrest the decline of hand loom production and to mitigate the suffering of the doomed workers. Most of them continued to subsist without joy or hope. The courage they had displayed during the riotous days died down as quickly as it had flared up. The ever increasing use of machines sealed their doom. Every year took its toll of weaver lives until but few were left to carry on an abject existence. Yet the struggle that ended in defeat was not wholly futile. The nameless victims whose blood was shed on the fifth of June, 1844, and their many comrades who rotted behind prison walls or in wretched hovels [112]

The Climax of the Early Social Lyric

left an indelible impress upon their age. Poets and dramatists, novelists and essayists called attention to this first active expression of the German proletariat and warned of the innumerable clashes that must follow between the state and its pauperized masses unless a solution of the industrial question were quickly found. The fear that a satisfactory solution was beyond the will and the power of the ruling class, the recognition that mankind still had to traverse a vale of tears and a highway of horrors before the promised land dawned, lent a note of tragedy to all the literary productions for which the Silesian riots furnished the inspiration.

Poems about weavers were not unknown in Germany even before 1844. Ever since the sixteenth century, songs circulated telling of the joys and sorrows of this profession. In 1829 Hoffmann von Fallersleben, best known as the author of the German national anthem, wrote his "*Song of the Old Weavers*," a lament of workers who had grown old at their looms without a moment of leisure or of freedom from care. Spring blooms all about them and they would like to share in the delights of wood and meadow. But, alas, their life hangs upon a thread, the thread they are weaving, and they may not leave their stools. Nevertheless, though doomed

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

to a dreary, colorless existence, they nourish the hope that God will some day grant them a spring of leisure and a haven of peace. Throughout his life Hoffmann von Fallersleben, the popular champion of an advanced political philosophy, remained an adherent of a conciliatory social creed. His only poetic reaction to the Silesian uprising was a weak and pious wish, included in his "*Song for the New Year* 1845," that the weavers might at length be granted bread. A similar wish is voiced by Gustav Freytag, who in 1844 issued a poetic appeal in behalf of the loom workers. Freytag who was one of the organizers of the Breslau relief society later indicated in an article in the periodical *Grenzboten*, of which he was one of the editors, that he was well aware that no permanent help was possible and that the bread of charity was at best but a temporary palliative for an incurable social disease.

The lyric of the weavers reaches its height in Ferdinand Freiligrath and Heinrich Heine. The former's plaintive poem "From the Silesian Mountains" was written at St. Goar, a peaceful little town along the Rhine, three months before the disorders of Langenbielau. It appeared towards the end of August of the same year in the volume, entitled *A Confession of Faith*, a volume that will occupy our [114]

The Climax of the Early Social Lyric

attention in the following chapter. Freiligrath who had hitherto refrained from treating controversial problems in his poems and who had indeed assailed Herwegh for degrading the lyricist to the level of the pamphleteer, now himself took up poetic cudgels in behalf of the suffering masses and with inflaming verses rushed into the thick of the political fray. "From the Silesian Mountains" pictures a thirteen year old boy going out into woods with his linen pack and praying to Rübezahl, the Silesian giant who helps people in their distress. The first fragrant green is on the ground. The chaffinch is building her nest. The hungry youth has escaped from his scolding father and his weeping mother in order to seek out the haunts of Rübezahl. Will the mountain spirit heed his cries? Will he buy the pure white linen that is offered to him and thus bring bread and joy to a humble home? If Rübezahl would only be kind to him, mother's pale cheeks would regain color, father would cease to mutter curses, and the little brothers would jump with glee. But Rübezahl is silent, and though the boy calls for him hour after hour until his voice is hoarse with weeping, he receives no answer and must return with empty hands to his cold hearth.

In a poetic supplement written after the Silesian

[115]

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

riots, Freiligrath again speaks through the mouth of the weaver boy. Spring has yielded to autumn, the leaves have withered, the birds have flown away. Hunger, however, knows no change of season and still cries for appeasement. The youth has grown weak and ill. His mother is dead, having succumbed to want. His father is in the grave, having been killed at Langenbielau, when soldiers fired upon the poor in order to protect the possessions of the rich. He himself no longer expects help from Rübezahl, for he has lost all faith in miracles. The first flakes of snow are falling. Will they cover him wholly and thus release him from a future of pain? Or will he live on to call down destruction upon a sin-laden society? We do not know, for the poem remained unfinished. Apparently it was written by Freiligrath towards the end of August and abandoned when he had to leave Germany and wander forth into exile.

It was in exile that the most powerful poem of the weavers arose. On the banks of the Seine, far from the scene of the riots, Heinrich Heine found words of fire and verses of iron wherein to clothe the rage and despair that filled the soul of the workers to overflowing. The elegiacal tone that characterized Freiligrath's weaver boy is wholly lacking in [116]

The Climax of the Early Social Lyric

Heine's hymn of hate, which first appeared in Paris in the socialistic organ *Vorwärts* on the tenth of July, 1844, under the title "The Silesian Weavers." The poet's early dream of a peaceful social development towards universal enjoyment of the comforts of earth was at this time giving way to bitter disillusionment. In the Silesian disturbances he hears the first rumblings of a coming revolution, not a revolution led by an enlightened aristocracy of talent, but one impelled by the knights of the gutter and their allies of the attics. Already hungry fists were attacking stone walls. Already soldiers were being forced to fire upon their unarmed brothers. An incalculable menace lay in glaring eyes and gnashing teeth, a menace that neither bullets nor iron bars could dispel.

From darkened eyes no tears are falling;
Gnashing our teeth, we sit here calling;
"Germany, listen, ere we disperse,
We weave your shroud with a triple curse—
We weave, we are weaving!

"A curse to the false God that we prayed to,
And worshipped in spite of all, and obeyed, too.
We waited and hoped and suffered in vain;
He laughed at us, sneering, for all of our pain—
We weave, we are weaving!

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

"A curse to the king, and a curse to his coffin,
The rich man's king whom our plight could not soften;
Who took our last penny by taxes and cheats,
And let us be shot like dogs in the streets—
We weave, we are weaving!

"A curse to the Fatherland, whose face is
Covered with lies and foul disgraces;
Where the bud is crushed as it leaves the seed,
And the worm grows fat on corruption and greed—
We weave, we are weaving!

"The shuttle flies in the creaking loom;
And night and day we weave your doom—
Old Germany, listen, ere we disperse,
We weave your shroud with a triple curse!
We weave—we are weaving!"

Heine may have magnified the importance of industrial disturbances such as those of the Silesian weavers, but he sincerely believed them to be warning signals of an approaching social catastrophe. This attitude is shared by the lyrists who write under his influence. Thus, the Suabian political poet Ludwig Pfau represents in his poem "The Linen-Weaver" an old worker sitting at the deathbed of his wife and treading the loom with his weary foot. From his famished lips escapes no prayer but rather curse upon curse, a curse for the employer who basks in the sun while his workers slave for a pittance, a

[118]

The Climax of the Early Social Lyric

curse for the priest who preaches that misery on earth earns bliss in heaven, a curse for the king who bestows upon his humble subjects bullets instead of bread. In another poem, entitled "The Silesian Weaver," Pfau depicts the tragedy of the loom worker whom the industrial depression compels to wander forth across the ocean in search for bread. To a considerable extent the poet draws upon the experiences of his own family. His father who was a gardener was forced to economic distress to leave his beloved Suabian home and go to America, the land of freedom, the haven of tens of thousands in this decade. He himself remained in Germany and within a few years gained recognition as a lyricist, critic, and translator.

A poet of greater power than Ludwig Pfau was Georg Weerth, whom Friedrich Engels called the first and greatest of the pre-revolutionary proletarian poets. Born in 1821 at Detmold, the birthplace also of Freiligrath, he became one of the editors of the socialistic *New Rhenish Gazette* in the critical years 1848 and 1849. Forced to flee from his native land after the failure of the revolution, he died at Havana in 1856. The year of the weaver riots found him at Bradford in England. The first of his *Songs from Lancashire* (1845) told of the effect

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

that the Silesian uprising produced upon a group of brawny, unkempt English Chartists who were gathered at an inn at York or Lancashire. As they listened to the pathetic details, tears came to their eyes. They clenched their fists and jumped to their feet. Far and wide their shouts were heard resounding over woods and meadows: "Good luck to you, Silesia!"

Weerth's literary associates in the socialistic movement of the Forties saw in the Silesian incidents excellent material for propaganda. In Ernst Dronke's bitter poem "The Weaver's Wife" we hear the lament of a mother over the body of her dying child that was struck down by a soldier's bullet during the weaver riots. The father now rots in prison for having taken part in the attack on the factories. The mother, alone in her distress and hate, calls down the vengeance of heaven upon the murderers.

The socialist editor Hermann Püttmann writes under the title *Silesia* (1845) an entire cycle of ballads dealing with the weaver uprising, and in spite of the fact that the individual ballads have little poetic value, they are several times reprinted; primarily because of the interest aroused by their subject matter. Another socialist poet Adolf Schults represents in his poem "The Noble Lords of Indus-

[120]

The Climax of the Early Social Lyric

try" captains of industry feasting at a banquet. The worthy men are proud of their country and no less so of their profits. They fill their glasses with champagne and, rising to their feet, they drink to the health of the poor hungry weavers. Still another socialist lyricist, Gustav Reinhard Neuhaus, calls in numerous lyrics for our sympathy with the poor children who go forth at dawn to tend the spinning machines and with care-worn workers who may not rest even at sundown. The Lusatian poet Eduard Kauffer in his lyric "The Linen-Weaver" prophesies the eventual victory of the warriors of despair who for the moment seem to be defeated. Anastasius Grün, Adolf Schirmer, Karl Beck, Titus Ullrich, Louise Otto, Louise Aston, Ludwig Köhler, Heinrich Pröhle, and several anonymous poets champion the cause of the weavers in poems of varying quality. If at times the ethical element is over-emphasized at the expense of the purely aesthetic, it yet remains true that here we have a serious attempt to translate into lyrical forms the gray monotony of workers' existences, the dull beating of machine pistons, the inaudible pains of hunger.

In fiction and in drama the material of the Silesian uprising finds no less adequate treatment than in lyric poetry. The most important versions are

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

those of Ernst Willkomm, Robert Prutz, and Gerhart Hauptmann. This literature is one of gloom broken only now and then by a ray of hope which flares and dies. It knows little of Malthus and Ricardo, of laissez-faire and inevitable economic processes. It hears but the moan of suffering creatures and the wail of crippled souls. It reproduces sounds that are comparatively rare in the literature of the preceding decades: the first cry of the babe born in a hallway, the piteous cry of the child condemned to inhuman labor, the piercing cry of the youth maimed by the machine, the helpless cry of the maiden sold by Want to Lust; cries of hunger and anguish, of rage and revolt, of despair and desolation; cries that forewarn of mass frenzy and coming revolutions.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LYRIC OF SOCIAL REVOLT

THE Revolution of 1848 was primarily a political uprising. But it had its deep social undercurrents. The pacific panaceas of a St. Simon or a Fourier which impressed Germans at the beginning of the decade gave way before its close to new social theories which no longer advocated a reconciliation of the industrial classes but rather an intensification of the antagonism between them. Socialism and communism now loomed into prominence. Anarchism reared its head. Lorenz von Stein in 1842 and Friedrich Engels in 1843 made Germany acquainted with the radical movements of France and England. Karl Marx opened in 1842 his attacks upon the reactionary government of Prussia. Wilhelm Weitling organized his secret societies of revolutionary workers. Translations of Proudhon began to appear. Max Stirner wrote his philosophical justification of anarchism in his book *The Ego and His Own*. The German atmosphere was surcharged with plans for

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

social change. At first these plans were based either upon the abstract idealistic philosophy of a Fichte or a Hegel or else upon the experiences of the more advanced English and French industrial workers. Soon, however, the increasing labor difficulties in the heart of Germany itself called attention to the rapid growth of the native proletariat. The weaver-riots of Peterswaldau and Langenbielau were soon followed by the strike of the calico printers at Berlin. These suddenly left their factories in a body, insisting that they could no longer toil at the old prices. Although no excesses were committed, nevertheless the police arrested several of the older employees and succeeded in effecting a quick settlement. At Glogau in Silesia a similar episode occurred. The railroad laborers suddenly threw down their picks and shovels, and interference by the military forces was necessary to compel them to return to work. In 1847 a hunger revolt broke out in Berlin. The failure of the crops had brought a sharp increase in the cost of living during the early part of this year. On the morning of April 19, a crowd of women, infuriated by the high prices, attacked the largest market of the city and plundered the stands of their potatoes and vegetables. Intoxicated by its first success, the mob soon numbering thousands, proceeded to wreak its

[124]

The Lyric of Social Revolt

vengeance upon other markets. By the twenty-first, riotous groups of housewives and gamins were directing their efforts against bakers, butchers, and grocers. By the twenty-second, men were taking charge of the crowds and were methodically emptying stores of their provisions. If a shopkeeper dared to protest, he was beaten and his windows were smashed. By the twenty-third, the situation had grown extremely threatening. The government had to take strenuous action. Soldiers were sent out against the marauders and restored order with the flat of the blade. This episode was afterwards ridiculed as the "Potato War," but it excellently brought to the fore the unrest that was seething in the masses and that was to break forth with greater violence in the following year.

Throughout the decade, poets were sounding the call for a political and social revolution. Herwegh in his lyric "Proclamation" (1841) advised the people to tear the crosses out of the earth in order to beat them into swords; for the road to salvation led through blood and hell, and God would surely pardon the use of his holy iron in a battle against tyrants and philistines. Alfred Meissner in lyrics of 1843 to 1845 ridiculed the half-hearted efforts of the middle class to bring about a little more freedom

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

of the press or assembly at a time when the masses were moaning for black bread. Parties of the right and parties of the left would, in his opinion, never enter in a serious conflict with each other; for they both desired gold and women, palaces and banquets, horses and hounds. But the anger of the oppressed was rising. Soon these would demand more than mere bread. A struggle was about to begin, a devastating struggle between rich and poor. Out of the ranks of the helots, a Spartacus would arise, an angel of vengeance. With a beggar's coat as a flag, the proletariat would set out to burn and to destroy, until the culture and the sins of a thousand years would lie in ruin and ashes. The greatest of all civil wars might still be ward off, if only the threatening signs were recognized. *Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin*,—the words written on the wall of Babylon while its lords feasted is referred to by Meissner, and not only by him. They were also used as titles of social lyrics by Emanuel Geibel (1846) and Herman Semmig (1847).

In Geibel's poem, we see the dance of high society about the golden calf. Candles sparkle, music resounds, and scantily dressed maidens serve foaming wine. Outside the palace wall, thousands of hungry faces gather in the dimness of night. Led by an
[126]

The Lyric of Social Revolt

Amazon with a red flag, they surround the banquet-hall. Still the carousers dance on, though hollow-eyed death is all about them. Amidst their reveling they do not hear the creaking pillars and the crashing beams. They have eyes and see not. The writing on the wall will save them as little as it saved the ruler of Babylon.

Semmig's poem sounds a similar note. The mission of the prophet has now devolved upon the poet, and he it is who now interprets the ominous signs. Will the ruling class give heed to his words or must these words be reenforced by the tramp of innumerable feet?

The spectre of the marching millions who would one day be gathered under the banner of communism is invoked in many a grim lyric. In 1844, Semmig writes a communist marching song which echoes in its rhythm the heavy stamping of the maddened mobs. We hear the wild cry for vengeance on the lips of thousands, the hoarse laughter of beasts that once were men, and the savage curse of beings that might have dreamed of beauty. Before us parades the vanguard of the social revolution with beggars' staffs as its weapons and a shabby cloth wet with tears as its flag.

In the lyrics of Georg Weerth, the rage against

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

the established order reaches its climax. A proletarian victim prays that God make of him a lion, a tiger, a wild panther that he might tear many a rich tyrant with his claws. A munition worker, who has been discharged because of old age, mutters his conviction that it is time for the workers to forge cannon for their own battle that must soon begin.

Communism as the great menace of the future is recognized by Gottfried Keller as early as 1843. It appears to him as the romantic creation of a fevered brain, impossible of accomplishment without increasing misery. Its chief driving force seems to him to be envy of the rich, the desire on the part of the poor also to partake of luxury and sensuality. "O, you fools!" he writes in a letter of July 10, 1843, "If you desire universal public education, civil service, and state provision for the incapacitated, then I'm with you, body and soul. But as far as your really fanatical and revolutionary plans are concerned—keep away from me. Go to a lunacy asylum, if you take them seriously, or to the devil, if you only mean your own stomach!"

Even before Gottfried Keller, another famous Swiss writer, Jeremias Gotthelf, observed the changed attitude that was gradually taking possession of the masses. In 1840 he notes in his social [128]

The Lyric of Social Revolt

tract, *Poverty*, that the poor of his day were no longer content like Lazarus to lie quietly before the gates and to satisfy themselves with sucking their wounds, to beg humbly for a piece of bread, and to give thanks for every crumb from the tables of the rich, to be constantly at the service of their benefactor and to include him in their prayers to God. "A new spirit has arisen among them. Their hearts seethe with hatred of the well-to-do; their eyes lust for a share of the wealth about them; their mouths speak unblushingly of a coming day of retribution; and whatever they receive, they consider not as alms but as a part of that which is justly due them."

This is precisely the stand taken by Wilhelm Weitling in his essay entitled *Guarantees of Harmony and Freedom* (1842). With prophetic pathos he writes of the last holy war to be waged by the hordes of communists: "Hail to those who will live to see this day! In the annals of human history there will be no other to compare with it: for this will be the day of knowledge and atonement. . . . Forward, brothers! With a curse for Mammon on our lips, let us await the hour of liberation that is to convert our tears to refreshing dew-drops, the earth to a paradise, and mankind to a single family."

Similar sentiments are voiced in the letters of Ar-

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

nold Ruge. On May 15, 1844, he writes to Feuerbach that the two cardinal principles of the communists are: the destruction of the bourgeois system by means of bloody catastrophes and the establishment of the millennium of real freedom and equality.

In a conversation with Arnold Ruge, Friedrich Hebbel correctly diagnoses the cardinal weakness of the former's communistic millennium. Hebbel points out that the new world, which is to be established at a tremendous price of blood and tears, would before long again divide into two parties, the hunted and the hunters; for human beings would increase so rapidly in the new state that they would necessarily have to devour each other in the struggle for existence, and then we would again be faced by an aristocracy that consumed and a plebeian mob that was consumed.

It may be well to note here that Hebbel was not so far removed from the problems of the proletariat as has been usually assumed. It is true that he cared but little for the new inventions, and that, for example, on visiting the Paris industrial exposition in 1844 a feeling of disgust overcame him in the presence of the strange machines. At the same time, however, he who was himself a victim of poverty [130]

The Lyric of Social Revolt

could not be wholly indifferent to the unequal distribution of wealth. As early as 1843, he writes in his diary: "Is this a just social system, in which an individual, favored by circumstances, can snatch for himself and, if he desires it, retain without cultivating what is absolutely necessary to keep need and death from thousands." As an illustration of the ruinous effects of private property he asks us to imagine what would happen to society, if Rothschild were to decide to invest all his money in land and to leave this land untilled. According to current property law Rothschild was at liberty to do this, even if it meant starvation for millions. The philosophical dramatist recognizes that there are two sides to the question of private ownership. On the one hand, every one who is brought into the world has a right to demand that it nourish him. On the other hand, common possession of things would do away with a great many incentives which human nature needs to keep it from flagging. Limitation of individual ownership might, in his opinion, prove to be the only satisfactory solution. He wonders, however, whether the burning question of pauperism would really be solved so peacefully. He believes, as did his philosophic idol, Hegel, that historical changes had a habit of moving from one extreme to

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

another. Might not a time come, he asks, when the people who now execute the poor wretch because he laid hands on their property, would in turn be executed by the poor, because they were in possession of this property? Private ownership necessitated an army to protect it against the propertyless. Might not the soldiers suddenly remind themselves that they too belonged to the common people, and if they should be called on to fire, might they not direct their bullets against those who gave the command? The poet himself does not wish for such situations, but he doubts whether they can be avoided. He fears the madness of communism and though he does not believe that a communistic order can long endure, nevertheless, in his opinion, even its temporary dominance might suffice to destroy the very roots of European culture. He cannot agree with those who would abolish the existing privileged classes in order to substitute in their stead a new privileged class. Such would be the case, if a state which concerned itself little with finding a market for the pictures of the painter, the masterpieces of the artisan, or the products of the farmer were compelled to guarantee the manual laborer a fixed price for all his work, regardless of the current value of such work. By [132]

The Lyric of Social Revolt

favoring a special type of employee, such a state would simply make one proletarian the leech that fed on the blood of another. For, in order to cover the deficit caused to the state by fluctuating selling prices, taxes would have to be increased enormously, and taxes were paid not merely by aristocrats and capitalists but by other citizens as well, including even the peasants.

Economic reasoning such as was native to the philosophic temper of a Hebbel was, however, largely foreign to the communistic rhapsodists who in the second half of the Forties launched lyrics that made up in violence what they lacked in grace. The first German collection of verse that proudly bore the word communistic in its title was published at Dresden in 1844. The anonymous author, who called his volume *Renegade and Communist Songs*, knew little of the essentials of true poetry. His ranting and moaning were fortunately soon forgotten. A second collection, which was of far greater aesthetic value, appeared in 1847 under a fictitious title, designed to outwit the watchful eyes of the authorities. Hermann Püttmann was the editor of this *Album of Original Poetry*. Among the contributors were most of the social lyrists of the Forties. The collec-

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

tion was republished in 1851 under the title *Socialist Song Book*, and has been until now a chief source for radical anthologies in German.

In the literary remains of Friedrich Engels a manuscript was discovered by the Berlin scholar Gustav Mayer in which the co-author of the *Communist Manifesto* ridiculed the so-called proletarian poets, in whose number he included Hermann Püttmann, Alfred Meissner, Moritz Hartmann, Louise Otto, Herman Semmig, and Otto Lüning. He even denounced Freiligrath and Dronke as bourgeois, although they accepted the class struggle in all its implications. Karl Beck, whom Engels had formerly adored and imitated, he now branded as the father of the philanthropic-hypocritical, petit-bourgeois school of poets, a school that was thoroughly satisfied with the existing order but that merely bewailed the persistence of poverty. The mistake of Beck and his consorts consisted in singing of the poor man, the "pauvre honteux," and not of the proud, threatening revolutionary proletarian. The forced bass of these poets was always changing to a comic falsetto. Their dramatic representation of the gigantic writhing of an Enceladus reminded one merely of the humorous contortions of a manikin.

If, according to Engels and we may well add
[134]

The Lyric of Social Revolt

according to his co-worker Marx, the poets enumerated above were not the true literary pioneers of the class-conscious plebeians, where were such pioneers to be found? Marx may well discern the true expression of the proletarian soul in folk-ballads of the type current in Silesia during the weaver uprising. He may well call the Zwanziger song, which we discussed in the preceding chapter, the pearl of the German proletariat. But such pearls were rare and the factory worker was almost always inarticulate, since his daily toil deprived him of the leisure necessary for the development of perfect artistic forms of expression. It was inevitable that for many decades the joys and sorrows of the humble would have to be presented largely by poets of the upper or middle classes. Engels found such a poet in Heine and in 1844 he translated Heine's lyric "The Silesian Weavers" into English for Robert Owen's *New Moral World*. Marx found a poet more amenable to his ideas in Ferdinand Freiligrath, whom he regarded as the laureate of the social revolution and whose cooperation he obtained in editing the *New Rhenish Gazette*.

In Freiligrath's poetry two distinct periods have been noted: the youthful Weltschmerz period in the Thirties and the revolutionary period in the late

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

Forties. Yet if we were to accept the poet's own testimony of the course of his productive life we would find a common note running through his entire creative writing in these decades. In 1852, on looking back upon both stages of his poetic career, he remarked that the first phase in which he sang of the tropics and the jungle was in essence as revolutionary as his later political and social phase, for in both of these he was voicing his most vigorous opposition against 'tame' poetry and a 'tame' society. He was but reliving that paradoxical development which we have noticed in so many other poets of this generation, namely, the birth of a radical social consciousness out of the anti-social mood of *Weltschmerz*. At first he tried to escape from the intolerable reaction of his native land in dreams of oriental splendor. He justified his indifference to the political conflicts of his generation by insisting that the poet on his watch-tower stood far above the pettiness of parties. But the rising tide of polemic verse, caused by the ever deepening conservatism of the Prussian régime, made it extremely difficult for him to maintain his colorless position of neutrality. Goaded and exhorted by friends and foes, he finally gave lyric expression to his political views in a slender volume of verse, entitled *A Con-*
[136]

The Lyric of Social Revolt

fession of Faith (1844), a volume that made a tremendous stir throughout Germany and that proved to be the turning point of his career. For he who had basked in the favor of the Prussian monarch, now broke with his royal patron and definitely aligned himself with the anti-government groups. Forced into exile, he there came into frequent contact with Karl Marx and Karl Heinzen, and under their influence his political liberalism gradually assumed a more radical hue. Soon he shared their conviction that a mere political reorganization of Germany would not suffice to remove the distress under which increasing thousands were suffering. Communistic doctrines began to attract him. In 1846 he wrote to his friend Karl Buchner: "I am no communist, at least not a fanatical one, but I believe that this new dogma, even if regarded merely as a form of transition, is yet an essential step forward, and that because of its humanitarian basis it can do more to inspire, promote, and effect a decisive change than can any one-sided political doctrine. Surely we have passed beyond the illusions of petty German constitutions! Communism will have a future! All its dreams will not be realized, but if like Columbus it fail to land in India, it will yet discover an America."

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

In the opening lyric of *Ça Ira* (1846) Freiligrath called upon all courageous spirits to set sail for a new America. In a ship named Revolution they would cross the watery waste and reach the socialistic paradise where no poor wailed and where the herd needed no herdsman.

Another lyric of the same group foretold the course of the proletarian upheaval. The hungry, ill-clad populace would storm the arsenal in its despair; troops sent out to quell the revolt would join the rebels; the human avalanche would hurl itself upon the capital and the throne. In the end the masses would emerge from their baptism of blood and fire with head upreared in pride and joy.

In another lyric the reactionary order is compared to the palace of ice built by Empress Anna of Russia, a palace that must thaw with the coming of spring. Now a spring of freedom was at hand; yet they who danced within the palace heeded not the crashing of the ice, but hoped for a returning frost to harden the melting blocks. In vain! Spring and doom were not to be delayed much longer. It is the old theme of the "Mene, mene" poems to which Freiligrath has merely given a new form.

The same prophetic tone recurs again in the best
[138]

The Lyric of Social Revolt

of the *Ça Ira* lyrics, the one entitled "Up from the Depths." In this poem we see the King and the Queen strolling on the polished deck of a Rhine steamer and admiring the golden sunset, the storied cities, and the vine-covered banks. They think they are the lords of the floating palace who are merely puppets tip-toeing on its surface. For, the true master of the ship is the begrimed machinist who feeds the flaming furnace below deck, who at his will can make the wheels and pistons bear Their Majesties to their destination or else with a jerk of a handle send them flying through the air with all their fine array. The most powerful poetic expression of Marxian socialism before the March Revolution is contained in the words addressed by the sweating machinist to the idle monarch:

"Wie mahnt dies Boot mich an den Staat! Licht auf
den Höhen wandelst *du*!

Tief unten aber, in der Nacht und in der Arbeit dunkelm Schoss,

Tief unten, von der Not gespornt, da schür' and
schmied' ich mir mein Los!

Nicht meines nur, auch deines, Herr! Wer hält die
Räder dir im Takt,

Wenn nicht mit schwielenharter Faust der Heizer seine
Eisen packt?

Du bist viel weniger ein Zeus, als ich, o König, ein
Titan!

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

Beherrscht' ich nicht, auf dem du gehst, den allzeit
kochenden Vulkan?
Es liegt an mir:—ein Ruck von mir, ein Schlag von mir
zu dieser Frist,
Und siehe, das Gebäude stürzt, von welchem du die
Spitze bist!
Der Boden birst, aufschlägt die Glut und sprengt dich
krachend in die Luft!
Wir aber steigen feuerfest aufwärts ans Licht aus unsrer
Gruft!
Wir sind die Kraft! Wir hämmern jung das alte
morsche Ding, den Staat,
Die wir von Gottes Zorne sind bis jetzt das Prole-
tariat!
Dann schreit' ich jauchzend durch die Welt! Auf
meinen Schultern, stark und breit,
Ein neuer Sankt Christophorus, trag ich den Christ der
neuen Zeit!
Ich bin der Riese, der nicht wankt! Ich bin's, durch
den zum Siegesfest
Über den tosenden Strom der Zeit der Heiland Geist
sich tragen lässt!"

Though Freiligrath is firmly convinced that a proletarian uprising is inevitable, nevertheless the years of waiting in exile weigh heavily upon him. He has made up his mind to refuse royal amnesty if ever it be offered to him. He wants to go back to the land of his birth only as the free poet of a free people and under such circumstances decades

[140]

The Lyric of Social Revolt

may pass before his return. Early in 1848, while harassed by financial troubles, he receives an invitation from American friends among whom is Henry Wadsworth Longfellow to settle in the United States. Just as he definitely determines to accept this invitation, he learns of the February uprising in Paris and at once abandons all thought of an idyllic home beyond the Atlantic. He feels that as the prophet of revolution he cannot now forsake the cause of the rebels. On February 25 he writes in London his stirring invocation to arms, a poetic epistle entitled "In the Highlands Fell the First Shot." In this poem he compares the Revolution to an avalanche which began in Switzerland, which swept on into Italy, which overwhelmed France, and which could no longer be impeded. Soon it would be felt in Hungary, it would be heard in Poland, it would thunder on through Germany.

The proclamation of a republic in France rouses in Freiligrath the hope that in a short while the German states will follow suit. In a poem of February 26 with the refrain "Vive la République," he applauds the downfall of the monarchy and hails the republics that would soon arise along the Rhine, Elbe, and Danube in the wake of the one along the Seine. Much to his disappointment the Berlin rebels

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

who in March successfully held their own against the royal troops and because of their momentary victory might have forced Frederick William IV to accede to a demand for abdication, merely contented themselves with modest pleas for amnesty, freedom of the press, and the granting of a liberal constitution. In a poem entitled "Berlin" Freiligrath adjures the German people not to let the fruits of victory slip from their grasp and not to clamor for a German emperor when they had the power to establish a German republic.

With every week, however, the poet notices the growth in strength of the reactionary forces that were quickly recovering from their momentary setback. In a vigorous lyric, written in the manner of Burns' poem "For a' that," he proclaims the ultimate doom of the monarchical form of government, even though it be supported by the bourgeoisie who preferred reaction to radicalism. The cause of the common people must triumph in the end.

"Doch sind wir frisch und wohlgemut
Und zagen nicht trotz alledem!
In tiefer Brust des Zornes Glut,
Die hält uns warm trotz alledem!
Trotz alledem und alledem!
Es gilt uns gleich trotz alledem!
Wir schütteln uns: Ein garst' ger Wind,
Doch weiter nichts trotz alledem!"

The Lyric of Social Revolt

Little did the rebel Freiligrath dream that the verses of this poem written in June, 1848, would be repeated from the rostrum of a German parliament in the very same month three quarters of a century later and stir the hearts of representatives of all ranks of society. It was on the twenty-fourth of June, nineteen hundred and twenty-three that the poet's flaming words were invoked from the highest tribunal of Germany to cheer a people bleeding from deep wounds. It was at the height of the period of passive resistance. A dark day had dawned upon the defeated land and the entire nation was in mourning. It was the anniversary of the assassination of Rathenau, the one statesman who might have called a halt to the forces of disintegration then at work within the newly-born republic. In the Reichstag were gathered the leading men of the nation, the ministers and the statesmen, the financiers and the captains of industry, Communists, Democrats, Monarchists, Stresemann and Stinnes and Gerhart Hauptmann. There was a hush over the entire house. All were sitting silent, rapt, gazing before them in intense emotion. Their hearts were heavy with gloom, their faces were clouded with care. The worries of sixty million people were no easy burden for them to bear. Then Hugo Preuss, the father of the Weimar Constitution, arose to speak, and his

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

words of comfort and of hope reached their climax in the verses of Freiligrath:

“Nur was zerfällt, vertretenet ihr!
Seid Kasten nur, trotz alledem!
Wir sind das Volk, die Menschheit wir,
Sind ewig drum, trotz alledem!
Trotz alledem und alledem!
So kommt denn an, trotz alledem!
Ihr hemmt uns, doch ihr zwingt uns nicht—
Unser die Welt trotz alledem!”

This poem was the first that Freiligrath wrote upon his return to Germany. It was followed by the flaming hymn “The Dead to the Living,” in which he warned against the revived reaction and proclaimed the necessity of a social revolution to complete the work of the semi-successful political uprising. No longer was it the black-red-gold banner of the German Republic that he would hoist on the barricades but the red flag of the socialists. Now he whole-heartedly accepted as his own the radical doctrines propounded in the *Communist Manifesto* of the preceding year and joined the group about Marx and Engels as co-editor of the *New Rhenish Gazette* and as member of the Communist Alliance. When the *Gazette* had to cease publication in 1849 it was Freiligrath’s poem of farewell that flashed in flaming letters across the front page of the last [144]

The Lyric of Social Revolt

issue, and when the leaders of the Communist Alliance were indicted at Cologne in 1851 on account of their treasonable activities, it was merely his absence from Germany that saved him from imprisonment.

Never did Freiligrath falter in his adherence to the political and social philosophy he had voiced in the revolutionary decade. If in the 1850's he opposed the efforts of his fellow exiles to stir up discontent and minor revolts on the Continent, it was because he believed with Marx that governmental changes came about as a result of deep-rooted economic forces and could not be imported from abroad. His social poetry that reached its high point in the eventful months of 1848 and 1849 declined rapidly in the bleak years of returning reaction. The bitter struggle for bread paralyzed his creative powers. What little leisure he had was devoted to the translation and popularization of the poetry of England, France, and America. He introduced Walt Whitman to Germany at a time when the American poet was little known abroad or even at home. He became the great intermediary between English and German literature.

Freiligrath's hold upon the German soul to-day is not however based primarily upon his translations and interpretations of foreign poetry but upon his activity as the trumpeter of the social revolution.

CHAPTER IX

THE LYRIC OF SOCIAL CYNICISM

THE Revolution of 1848 that filled Freiligrath with divine frenzy and numerous other poets with ecstatic visions of social regeneration left the greatest living German lyricist unmoved. A sardonic smile flitted across Heine's lips as he read of the vain attempts of dreamers to give practical expression to their ideals. From a sick chamber he looked out upon a sick society and mocked at the absurdities of social quacks who were offering new panaceas for immedicable ills. He had lived to see the failure of his own panacea, St. Simonism. He had observed that the mechanization of production led not to greater leisure and increased happiness but to an intenser mechanization of life itself. He could point out that human beings in a highly industrialized community were merely automatons functioning according to a definite time-schedule. The Englishman, for example, not only served demons of wood and brass at the pace and according to the rhythm that

[146]

The Lyric of Social Cynicism

these prescribed but he even went about his other every-day duties in a similar mechanical fashion. Thus at a fixed hour he ate his beefsteak, made his speeches in Parliament, manicured his nails, entered the stage-coach, or hanged himself. The fatal effects of the insane worship of industry were apparent even in the very city of the poet's exile. He saw the Frenchman subordinating all efforts to the one task of grinding out gold ducats and wondered whether the downfall of the *ancien régime* and the rise to power of a plutocratic system spelled essentially an improvement. The old order with its privileged nobility was indeed worm-eaten to the core. But it had at least surface varnish and abundant perfume. The new society, however, lacked even these pale imitations of absolute beauty. Its unvarnished brutality, its unfragrant manners, its deification of the successful business man, its capitalization of the meanest vices such as greed and selfishness, had little to commend it to the poet and the man of genius. Heine summarized the philosophy of this society in the following quatrains:

"If you've much, you will have more.
You will multiply and add.
If you've little, you will lose
Even the little that you had.

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

"If you've neither purse nor pelf—
If you've nothing great or small—
You are better in your grave:
You've no right to live at all!"

Was escape possible from the rule of philistinism and materialism? Could salvation be expected at the hands of the mob and its vociferous leaders? Would social equality, which, in Heine's opinion, meant the reduction of all human beings to the low level of the majority, really result in universal happiness and increased beauty? Or was it not more likely that the new sansculottes would pump out of the social organism the last vestiges of sweetness, fragrance, and poetry? Heine pointed to America as the best example of a democratic country. America was to him a free stable where everybody could chew alike of life's material goods save a few million people with colored skin who were treated like dogs.

The poet no longer believed in the theory of the noble proletariat but, on the contrary, ridiculed those enthusiasts who advocated the rule of the fourth estate because they professed to find in it uncorrupted sources of beauty, goodness, and intelligence. He knew better. The rabble with which he had come in contact was ugly, wicked, and stupid. But [148]

The Lyric of Social Cynicism

he recognized that it necessarily had to be so on account of its environment. Ugliness was caused by dirt. If the dirt were removed from the slums of the cities and public baths introduced where everyone could bathe gratis, then the laborer would be as clean and as beautiful as the aristocratic dandy. Wickedness was the result of hunger. If all people were supplied with sufficient food, then crime and evil would be reduced to a negligible quantity. Stupidity was often due to ignorance. If public schools were established and knowledge made accessible to all, then the people might in the course of time develop remarkable intelligence.

Heine knew well that these unsensational suggestions would be disregarded. He fully realized that passion held greater sway over the masses than did reason. In the Revolution of 1848 he saw the prelude to a coming world revolution. He felt that the day was imminent when the changes in the economic life of peoples would compel the levelling of all national and political boundaries. The battle of the future would be fought not between hostile countries but between hostile classes in each country. This struggle he depicted with grim humor in his poem "The Roving Rats."

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

Among rats you only find
The full and the famished kind.
The full ones stay at home,
And the hungry ones go forth and roam.

Many thousand miles they wander;
They pause not to rest or ponder;
They speed in a grim unswerving track;
Neither wind nor rain can hold them back.

Over the hills they go,
And they swim the lakes below.
Some break their necks and some are drowned,
And the sick are left behind by the sound.

Each queer little fellow sticks out
An ugly, horrible snout,
And their heads are shaven, like radicals', flat;
Indeed they are all as bald as a rat.

These radicals ugly and odd,
Know nothing whatever of God,
Their children are never baptized. That their mating
Is a matter promiscuous hardly needs stating.

The material rat only thinks
Of what he eats and drinks.
He quite forgets, while drinking and eating,
That the soul is immortal, and time is fleeting.

So also the wild she-rat,
She fears neither hell nor cat.
No goods and no gold she possesses—her view
Is that earth should be parcelled out anew.

The Lyric of Social Cynicism

The wandering rats, alack!
Are already close. The pack
Is swarming and squeaking here, in our region;
They come, they come, and their number's legion.

Ah, woe is me! we are lost!
At the very gate stands the host.
The mayor, the senators—helpless crew—
They shake their heads: it is all they can do.

The citizens fly to arms,
The priests peal out alarms,
For property's threatened and toppling down—
Palladium dear to the orderly town.

But the ringing of bells, and the prayer of the priest,
And a senate's wise laws will not help in the least;
Your hundred-pounders, your cannons may volley—
You will find them, my children, the merest folly.

And likewise vain, now your fortunes ebb,
Is the lifeless art of the word-spun web.
For rats are not caught by snares syllogistic:
All your quibbles they'll jump—the most subtly sophistic.

Yes, hungry bellies will only seize on
The logic of soup, and a dumpling-reason,
And the arguments offered by roast-beef orations,
When strewn, say, with Göttingen-sausage-quotations.

To these radicals, finer than all you could utter
Is a good dried cod that's been boiled in butter.
No orator born since Cicero's time,
Not Mirabeau even, is half so sublime.

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

Enveloping himself in the robe of a Jeremiah, he predicted the advent to power of the uncultivated rabble, an event that aroused in him a mixed feeling of joy and fear. Joy filled him when he visioned the collapse of the dominant order whose life-long foe he had been. Fear overcame him when he thought of the society that would take its place, a society that would be ruled by the passions of the mob, a society that would ostracize art and expel the poet, a society that might be compared to a shorn and bleating herd over which ruled a single herdsman with an iron staff.

In the French preface to *Lutetia*, a preface written during the last months of Heine's life, the poet thus formulated his final attitude towards communism and communists: "With horror and fear do I contemplate the epoch when these somber iconoclasts will come into power: with their callous hands they will shatter mercilessly all the marble statues of beauty that are so dear to my heart; they will destroy all those fantastic toys and baubles of art that the poet loved so well; they will fell my laurel groves and plant potatoes therein; the lilies that toiled not nor span and that yet were clothed as magnificently as King Solomon in all his splendor will be uprooted from the soil of society unless they

[152]

The Lyric of Social Cynicism

want to take the spindle in their hands; the roses, these idle fiancées of the nightingales, will encounter the same fate; the nightingales themselves, the useless singers, will be chased away; and oh! my *Book of Songs* will serve the grocer for making bags into which he will pour coffee or snuff-tobacco for the old women of the future. Oh, I foresee all this and I am seized with an unutterable sadness at the thought of the ruin with which the victorious proletariat threatens my verses that will perish together with the entire old romantic world. And yet, I frankly confess that this very communism, though it is hostile to all my interests and inclinations, yet exercises an irresistible fascination over me. In my breast two voices arise in its favor, two voices that refuse to be silenced, that are perhaps at bottom no more than instigations of the devil. But, whatever their origin, they have seized hold of me and no power of exorcism can dislodge them. 'The devil is a logician!' says Dante. A terrible syllogism has bewitched me, and if I cannot refute the premise: 'all men have a right to eat,' then I am forced to accept all its consequences. When I think thus, I run the risk of losing my reason, I see all the demons of truth dance about me in triumph, and at last a generous despair grips my heart and I exclaim: this

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

old society has long since been judged and found guilty. May justice take its course. May destruction come upon this old world where innocence perished, egoism prospered, and man exploited man. May ruin overtake these whitewashed graves where dwelt falsehood and iniquity. And blessed be the grocer who will one day make bags out of my poems in which to pour coffee and tobacco for the poor honest old women who in our present unjust world are perhaps deprived of such pleasant things. *Fiat justitia, pereat mundus!*"

A second motive that drove Heine into the arms of Marx and his followers was their common hatred of narrow nationalism and their common profession of faith in internationalism. The poet maintained that throughout his life he sought to act as intermediary between France and Germany only to see his efforts wrecked every few years by a new wave of nationalism. He feared the outbreak of war between the land of his birth and the land of his exile. He foretold that such a war was likely to lead to a general conflagration and in its wake to a social revolution. "Wild, gloomy times are booming anear and the prophet who undertakes to write a new apocalypse will have to invent new monsters and indeed such terrible monsters that the old symbolic

[154]

The Lyric of Social Cynicism

beasts of the Apostle John would appear in comparison as mere doves and amorettes. The gods conceal their countenances out of pity for their human charges, their long cherished foster-children, and perhaps also out of fear for their own fate."

Thus the prophet of doom continued to hurl his ineffective thunderbolts while the hungry Forties were giving way to the prosperous Fifties, and the poets who had found most characteristic expression for the ferment of pre-revolutionary and revolutionary days were succumbing to silence or else writing of themes other than politics and industry. Karl Beck was silent, having made his peace with the Austrian government. Georg Herwegh sulked in exile, poetically sterile. Alfred Meissner eradicated all seditious or socialistic stanzas from the new edition of his works. Ernst Dronke, Georg Weerth, and other minor poets sank into oblivion. Freiligrath returned to his exiled home in England and began in London a severe struggle for bread. Moritz Hartmann fired his parting shot in his poetic *Chronicle of Priest Maurizius* (1849) and then busied himself with collecting unpolitical folk-songs of various French provinces.

The reading public was tired of poetic pleas for political insurrection and social regeneration. The

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

hurricane that had swept through the German lyric and that for a time brought dreamers and singers to the forefront of public life seemed to have spent itself and to have given way to a drowsy calm. In this calm, faint voices were heard preaching retreat from the sordidness of reality and the madness of smoky cities. Romanticism experienced a weak revival in the verses of Oskar von Redwitz, Otto Roquette, Friedrich Bodenstedt, and Joseph Victor von Scheffel. The old stage-coach was again lauded and the new railroad assailed. Knights and ladies once more peopled polished stanzas and minstrels stalked through wan romances. Forest and brook were again painted in medieval hues by weak successors of Novalis and Tieck. The smoke-stack disappeared from the poetic horizon and was replaced by the haunted castle. Inspiration was sought not at Hamburg or Berlin but along the Neckar and the Rhine. The innovations of subject-matter, introduced during the revolutionary decade, fell into desuetude.

Berlin, the industrial capital of Germany, ceased at this time to be the center of literary activity. Its position was usurped by Munich, the peaceful metropolis on the Isar. The Munich School of lyricists, which numbered among its members Geibel, Heyse, Grosse, Lingg, Schack, and Bodenstedt, was not in-
[156]

The Lyric of Social Cynicism

terested in widening the boundaries of poetry but rather strained towards perfection of form. Like the Parnassians in France, it believed in the emancipation of art from the fetters of commonplace existence, in art for art's sake. Its sensitive nerves could not tolerate the shriek of a factory whistle or the moan of a factory slave. No dissonance was, in its opinion, to mar the clear harmony of poetry. But what if life abounded in dissonances? Life must then be tamed and purged of its earthly crudeness before it could enter the realm of art. Geibel, the leader of the Munich School, insisted that even the cry of terror must not be recorded in all its shrillness and intensity as it emerged from the human breast, but it must rather be modulated to conform to a sublime rhythm.

Perhaps the devotion to outward form and the divorce of art from life were inevitable in the years of reaction when the presentation of controversial subjects was fraught with danger. Perhaps elegance of diction and beauty of meter loomed into prominence because there was no vital message that the poet could impart in this age which found its essential expression in science, industrialism, and music, not in poetry and religion.

It was an age of prosperity. The problem of pov-

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

erty became less acute and hence less vociferous. Increasing wealth resulted in apparently increasing contentment. Germany was rapidly being covered with a network of railroads. New inventions were constantly being introduced. Hardly had postal communications been perfected when the telegraph made its entry. Cities were growing in size and in number. The enterprising middle class, victorious in every field of endeavor, made its inroads upon literature. In Gustav Freytag it found a herald who idealized its homely virtues of thrift and industry. Freytag's novel, *Debit and Credit* (1855), a harmless study of the wholesale grocery business, represented the utmost extreme in realism that a corpulent philistine of the Fifties would tolerate. The Messianic dreams, the revolutionary pathos, the social resentment, so characteristic of the literature of the preceding decade, yielded to a complacent and docile tone which well harmonized with the mood of a prosperous generation.

Not until the Eighties, after the boom of prosperity had collapsed, did writers revert to the problems, the characters, and the radical tone of the Forties. It was then under the stimulus of foreign novelists and foreign dramatists that German fiction and German drama again became engrossed in the [158]

The Lyric of Social Cynicism

proletariat and its environment. However, though the narrative and dramatic artist might seek inspiration in the works of Zola, Ibsen, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, and other foreigners, the German lyricist had but to turn to native models and to continue the tradition established by Heine, Freiligrath, Herwegh, and their contemporaries.

The new society with its factories and slums, its mass starvation and mass action, was already portrayed, as we have seen, in the lyric of the revolutionary decade. The chief contribution of the naturalistic lyric at the close of the century was a more vivid technique in the depiction of this subject-matter and not the subject-matter itself.

The social lyric of the Forties may hence properly be referred to as the lyric of early naturalism. It arose amid a generation that was reared in Weltschmerz and offered to this generation a new hope and a new ideal: social service, emancipation of the humble. It envisioned the coming of the kingdom of heaven on earth by the substitution of mutual aid for mutual competition. It throbbed with profound pity for the proletarian wrecks cast aside by an implacable industrial order. It revealed virtue in rags and warm humanity in the hearts of criminals, paupers, and harlots. It rallied the inarticulate and

The Lyric of Social Cynicism

gave voice to their anger and their despair. It fanned their courage during the industrial struggles of Silesia, Berlin, and the Rhineland. It led them on to the barricades of 1848 and 1849, and it accompanied them to the graves of the fallen and back to the tombs of the living.

Who were these lyric pioneers of the proletariat? Forgotten dreamers whose verses stare at us from obscure anthologies and obscurer periodicals, warriors of the pen whose weapons once were burnished but now are rust-worn, singers at dawn who saw the industrial avalanche moving upon us but saw it dimly. No Goethe is among them and no Schiller. A few names tower above the rest: Beck, Herwegh, Meissner, Freiligrath, and one who embodied the yearning and the despair of the entire age: Heinrich Heine, prophet of Messiah and of Anti-Christ, evangelist of the Third Testament, social rebel and cynic.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

PAGE 1

seismograph . . . See Levin Schücking, *Literarische Geschmacksbildung*, München, 1923, p. 11.

PAGE 3

In Prussia . . . See Wilhelm Blos, *Deutsche Revolution*, Stuttgart, 1892, p. 38.

PAGE 5

Max Klinger . . . *Reisen vor der Sündflut*, 1810.

Cain . . . *ibid.*, p. 27.

PAGE 6

Those who have . . . *ibid.*, p. 141.

PAGE 7

Karl Marx . . . See Gustav Mayer, *Friedrich Engels*, Vol. I, Berlin, 1910, p. 273.

PAGE 8

Ferdinand Gregorovius . . . *Goethes Wilhelm Meister in seinen socialistischen Elementen entwickelt*, Königsberg, 1849.

Eichendorff . . . *Ahnung und Gegenwart*, 1811.

Tieck . . . *Der junge Tischlermeister*, 1836; *Des Lebens Überfluss*, 1839.

PAGE 9

Laube . . . See Paul Przygodda, *Laubes literarische Frühzeit*, "Berliner Beiträge," 20. Berlin, 1910.

Immermann . . . *Epigonen*, 1836.

PAGE 11

Ernst Willkomm . . . *Weisse Sklaven oder die Leiden des Volkes*, Leipzig, 1845. See also Fritz Hinnah, *Ernst Willkomm*, Münster, 1915.

Robert Prutz . . . *Das Engelchen*, Leipzig, 1851.

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

Alexander von Ungern Sternberg . . . *Paul*, Leipzig, 1845.
See also Joachim Kühn, "Alexander von Sternberg,"
Preussische Jahrbücher, April-June, 1920.

PAGE 12

Ernst Dronke . . . *Aus dem Volke*, Frankfurt, 1846.
Louise Otto . . . *Schloss und Fabrik*, Leipzig, 1846.
Th. Oelckers . . . *Fürst und Proletarier*, Leipzig, 1846.
Louise Aston . . . *Aus dem Leben einer Frau*, Hamburg,
1847.
C. A. Schloenbach . . . *Das deutsche Bauernbuch oder So
lebt das Volk!*, Berlin, 1848.
Otto Ruppius . . . *Eine Weberfamilie*, Leipzig, 1846.
efflorescence of the political lyric . . . See Christian Petzet,
Die Blütezeit der deutschen politischen Lyrik (1840-
1850), München, 1903

PAGE 13

credo of Alfred Meissner . . . in his *Gedichte*, 2 ed., Leip-
zig, 1846, p. 98.

CHAPTER II

PAGE 16

This chapter is in part based on an article by the author in
Philological Quarterly, Volume V, No. 3, entitled "Cham-
misso as a Social Poet."

PAGE 17

poems dealing with the lower classes . . . See *Chamissos
Werke*, edited by O. Walzel, 1892, p. 109; edited by H.
Tardel, Leipzig, 1907, I, 12; also G. A. Alfero, *Adalbert
von Chamisso*, Torino, 1924, p. 167.

PAGE 18

Büchner . . . See H. Lippmann, *Georg Büchner und die
Romantik*, München, 1923, p. 75.

Notes

PAGE 19

In several poems, such as . . . "Das Gebet der Witwe," 1831; "Die Verbannten," 1831; "Vergeltung," 1829.

PAGE 21

Chamisso's poems . . . such as "Schiller," 1832; "Der alte Sänger," 1833; "Mahnung," 1838.

PAGE 22

peasant is neither a toy . . . See "Das Riesen-Spielzeug," 1833.

Brittany . . . See "Die stille Gemeinde," 1838.

prayer of the wronged widow . . . See "Das Gebet der Witwe," 1831.

PAGE 23

You had better not . . . "Tue es lieber nicht."

Szekler Assembly . . . "Der Szekler Landtag."

PAGE 24

depths of society . . . See "Abba Glosk Leczeka," lines 1-2:

Es schallen gut im Liede der Purpur und das Schwert,

Doch hüllt sich oft in Lumpen, der auch ist preisenswert.

picturesque and sentimental features . . . Compare Béranger's "Le vieux Vagabond" or "Jacques" with Chamisso's "Der Bettler und sein Hund." See also V. Pollak, *Béranger in Deutschland*, Wien, 1908.

regnant social order . . . See *Chamissos Werke*, edited by J. E. Hitzig, 5 ed., Berlin, 1864, VI, 225. In a letter of August, 1831, to De la Foye in Paris, Chamisso writes: "Wir sind von lange her langsam und geräuschlos unablässig vorwärts gegangen, als alles still stand, oder sich unsinnig mühte zurückzugehen, wir haben in der Tat das Mehrste von dem, wonach bei Euch geschrien wird, Kommunal-Gesetz, Gleichheit vor dem Gesetz, eine Nationalarmee, die aus dem Volke hervorgeht, welches in seiner Gesammtheit ohne Ausnahme durch dieselbe geht,

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

wir haben Unterrichts-, Wohltätigkeits-Vereine und Gesetze u. s. w. Wir haben eine Gewohnheit der Rechtlichkeit, die zu einer andern Natur geworden ist, wir wissen nicht, was Gunst heisst. Wir haben eine väterliche Regierung, Liebe und Zutrauen zu dem Oberhaupte."

old washerwoman . . . See "Die alte Waschfrau," 1833, and "Zweites Lied von der alten Waschfrau," 1838.

PAGE 25

Hitzig tells of him . . . See *Chamisso's Werke*, edited by J. E. Hitzig, 5 ed., Berlin, 1864, VI, 145.

Steam Horse . . . "Das Dampfross," 1830.

PAGE 26

Railroad lyrics of the Thirties and Forties . . . For detailed treatment of this theme and for bibliographic references, see Felix Zimmermann, *Die Widerspiegelung der Technik in der deutschen Dichtung der Gegenwart*, Dresden, 1913, Chapter 3.

CHAPTER III

PAGE 40

career of Karl Beck . . . See Heinrich Velten, *Aus Karl Becks dichterischer Frühzeit*, Münster, 1908.

Gutzkow . . . *Ausgewählte Werke*, edited by H. H. Houben, Leipzig, XI, 107: "Das kräftigste und hoffnungsvollste Talent unter den jüngeren ist Karl Beck, der alle Mittel besitzt, ein deutscher Byron zu werden. Er ist, wie junger Rebenmost, eben in der Klärung begriffen. Aber die Anzeichen sind gut, es wird ein edles, preishaltiges Gewächs werden."

PAGE 41

Resurrection . . . "Auferstehung."

[166]

Notes

Songs of the Poor Man . . . *Lieder vom armen Mann*, Leipzig, 1846.

PAGE 42

Ihr Seligen . . . *ibid.*, p. 40.

PAGE 43

Georg Adler . . . *Geschichte der ersten sozialpolitischen Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland*, Breslau, 1885, p. 124.

CHAPTER IV

PAGE 51

This Book Belongs to the King . . . *Dies Buch gehört dem König*, Berlin, 1843.

PAGE 55

Béranger's influence . . . See V. Pollack, *Béranger in Deutschland*, Wien, 1908; R. Giuriani, *Béranger und die deutsche Lyrik*, Milan, 1902.

Fraternal Songs . . . *Brüderschaftslieder eines Rheinischen Poeten*, Darmstadt, 1846.

nightingale with eagle's claws . . . *Herweghs Werke*, edited by H. Tardel, II, 47.

PAGE 56

Poor Jacob . . . "Vom armen Jakob und von der kranken Lise," *ibid.*, I, 146.

PAGE 57

letter of February 8, 1843 . . . *ibid.*, III, 187.

PAGE 59

one of his epigrams . . . *ibid.*, I, 140.

CHAPTER V

PAGE 65

Alfred Meissner . . . *Gedichte*, 2 ed., Leipzig, 1846, p. 147.

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

PAGE 66

Gustav Freytag . . . *In Breslau—Gedichte*, Breslau, 1845, pp. 21–25: "Die Dirne."

PAGE 68

Hermann Püttmann . . . *Gedichte*, Herisau, 1846, p. 292: "Am Sarge einer Unglücklichen."

Georg Weerth . . . "Erst achtzehn Jahr," in *Rheinische Jahrbücher zur gesellschaftlichen Reform*, Vol. I, Darmstadt, 1845, pp. 347–349.

PAGE 69

Ludwig Köhler . . . *Freie Lieder*, Jena, 1846.

unmarried mother . . . O. H. Werner, *The Unmarried Mother in German Literature*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1917.

PAGE 70

Franz Dingelstedt . . . *Werke*, Stuttgart, 1877–1878, pp. 190–195: "Die Kindesmörderin."

Alfred Meissner . . . *Gedichte*, 2 ed., Leipzig, 1846, p. 116: "Einer Gefallenen."

Ernst Dronke . . . *Armensünderstimmen*, Altenburg, 1845; *Aus dem Volke*, Frankfurt, 1846; *Polizeigeschichten*, Frankfurt, 1846; *Berlin*, 2 vols., Frankfurt, 1846.

PAGE 74

Louis Untermeyer . . . *Poems of Heinrich Heine*, New York, 1917, p. 245. The German original is as follows:

Sie hatten sich beide so herzlich lieb,
Spitzbübin war sie, er war ein Dieb.
Wenn er Schelmenstreiche machte,
Sie warf sich aufs Bett und lachte.

Der Tag verging in Freud' und Lust,
Des Nachts lag sie an seiner Brust.

Notes

Als man ins Gefängnis ihn brachte,
Sie stand am Fenster und lachte.

Er liess ihr sagen: O komm zu mir,
Ich sehne mich so sehr nach dir,
Ich rufe nach dir, ich schmachte—
Sie schüttelt' das Haupt und lachte.

Um Sechse des Morgens ward er gehenkt,
Um Sieben ward er ins Grab gesenkt;
Sie aber schon um Achte
Trank roten Wein und lachte.

CHAPTER VI

PAGE 79

nectar and ambrosia . . . See Heine, *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*, II: "Wir wollen keine Sanskulotten sein, keine frugale Bürger, keine wohlfeile Präsidenten; wir stiften eine Demokratie gleichherrlicher, gleichheiliger, gleichbeseligter Götter. Ihr verlangt einfache Trachten, enthaltsame Sitten und ungewürzte Genüsse; wir hingegen verlangen Nektar und Ambrosia, Purpurmäntel, kostbare Wohlgerüche, Wollust und Pracht, lachenden Nymphentanz, Musik und Komödien."

writes Heine . . . Heine, *Memoirs*, translated by Gilbert Cannan, London, 1910, p. 269.

PAGE 80

Heinrich Heine is the leader . . . See S. Liptzin, *Heine*, Johnson Publishing Co., Richmond, Va., 1928.

PAGE 86

Ratcliff . . . In the dialogue between Ratcliff and Tom, the former remarks:

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

Einen Mann ergreift der Zorn,
Wenn er betrachtet, wie die Pfennigseelen,
Die Buben, oft im überflusse schwelgen,
In Samt und Seide schimmern, Austern schlürfen,
Sich in Champagner baden, in dem Bette
Des Doktor Graham ihre Kurzweil treiben,
In goldnen Wagen durch die Strassen rasseln,
Und stolz herabsehen auf den Hungerleider,
Der, mit dem letzten Hemde unterm Arm,
Langsam und seufzend nach dem Leihhaus wandert.
(Bitter lachend)

O seht mir doch die klugen, satten Leute,
Wie sie mit einem Walle von Gesetzen,
Sich wohlverwahren gegen allen Andrang
Der schreiend überläst'gen Hungerleider!
Weh' dem, der diesen Wall durchbricht!
Bereit sind Richter, Henker, Stricke, Galgen,—
Je nun! manchmal gibt's Leut', die das nicht scheun.

Tom:

So dacht' ich auch, und teilte ein die Menschen
In zwei Nationen, die sich wild bekriegen;
Nämlich in Satte und in Hungerleider.

PAGE 87

In London . . . See *Englische Fragmente*, 1828, Chapter II.

PAGE 89

Shelley . . . See S. Liptzin, *Shelley in Germany*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1924.

PAGE 93

A new and better song . . . translation by Margaret Armour in *Heine's Works*, New York, 1906, Vol. XI, p. 7.
The German original is as follows:

[170]

Notes

Ein neues Lied, ein besseres Lied,
O Freunde, will ich euch dichten!
Wir wollen hier auf Erden schon
Das Himmelreich errichten.

Wir wollen auf Erden glücklich sein,
Und wollen nicht mehr darben;
Verschlemmen soll nicht der faule Bauch,
Was fleissige Hände erwarben.

Es wächst hienieden Brot genug
Für alle Menschenkinder,
Auch Rosen und Myrten, Schönheit und Lust,
Und Zuckererbsen nicht minder.

Ja, Zuckererbsen für jedermann,
Sobald die Schoten platzen!
Den Himmel überlassen wir
Den Engeln und den Spatzen.

Und wachsen uns Flügel nach dem Tod,
So wollen wir euch besuchen
Dort oben, und wir, wir essen mit euch
Die seligsten Torten und Kuchen.

PAGE 94

Industry . . . "Die Industrie," *Deutsches Bürgerbuch*,
1845, p. 346.

CHAPTER VII

PAGE 96

This chapter is based upon the author's study: *The Weavers in German Literature*, Hesperia XVI, Göttingen, 1926.

PAGE 105

The justice to us . . . From the excellent translation of
[171]

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

Hauptmann's *Weber* by Mary Morrison with the following changes: "Zwanziger" instead of "Dreissiger," "Dierigs" instead of "servants." The song is extant in versions of twenty-four and of twenty-five stanzas. The latter version is as follows:

Hier im Ort ist das Gericht,
viel schlimmer als die Femen,
wo man nicht mehr ein Urteil spricht,
das Leben schnell zu nehmen.

Hier wird der Mensch langsam gequält,
hier ist die Folterkammer,
hier werden Seufzer viel gezählt
als Zeugen von dem Jammer.

Die Herren Zwanziger die Henker sind,
die Dierig ihre Schergen,
davon ein jeder tapfer schindt,
anstatt was zu verbergen.

Ihr Schurken all, ihr Satansbrut!
Ihr höllischen Kujone!
Ihr frisst der Armen Hab und Gut,
und Fluch wird euch zum Lohne!

Ihr seid die Quelle aller Not,
die hier den Armen drücket,
ihr seid's, die ihr das trockne Brot
noch von dem Munde rücket.

Was kümmerts euch, ob arme Leut
Kartoffeln kauen müssen,
wenn ihr nur könnt zu jeder Zeit
den besten Braten essen?

Notes

Kommt nun ein armer Webersmann,
die Arbeit zu besehen,
find't sich der kleinste Fehler dran,
wirds ihm gar schlecht ergehen.

Erhält er dann den kargen Lohn,
wird ihm noch abgezogen,
zeigt ihm die Tür mit Spott, und Hohn
kommt ihm noch nachgeflogen.

Hier hilft kein Bitten, hilft kein Flehn,
umsonst sind alle Klagen:
Gefällts euch nicht, so könnt ihr gehn,
am Hungertuche nagen.

Nun denke man sich diese Not
Und Elend dieser Armen;
zu Hause keinen Bissen Brot,
ist das nicht zum Erbarmen?

Erbarmen? Ha! ein schön Gefühl,
euch Kannibalen! fremde;
ein jeder kennt schon euer Ziel:
Es ist der Armen Haut und Hemde.

O! Euer Geld und euer Gut,
das wird dereinst zergehen
wie Butter an der Sonnen Glut,
wie wirds um euch dann stehen?

Wenn ihr dereinst nach dieser Zeit,
nach diesem Freudenleben,
dort, dort in jener Ewigkeit
sollt Rechenschaft abgeben?

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

Doch ha! sie glauben an keinen Gott,
noch weder an Höll und Himmel,
Religion ist nur ihr Spott,
hält sich ans Weltgetümmel.

Ihr fangt stets an zu jeder Zeit,
den Lohn herabzubringen,
und andere Schurken sind bereit,
eurem Beispiel nachzufolgen.

Der Reihe nach, folgt Hellmann nach,
ganz frech ohn alle Bande,
bei ihm ist auch herabgesetzt
der Lohn, zur wahren Schande.

Die Gebrüder Hofrichter sind,
was soll ich ihnen sagen?
Nach Willkür wird auch hier geschind't,
dem Reichtum nachzujagen,

und hat auch einer noch den Mut,
die Wahrheit nachzusagen,
dann kommts soweit, es kostet Blut,
und dann will man verklagen.

Herr Camlott, Langer genannt,
der wird dabei nicht fehlen,
einem jeden ist es wohl bekannt,
viel Lohn mag er nicht geben.

Wenn euch, wie für ein Lumpengeld,
die Ware hingeschmissen,
was euch dann zum Gewinne fehlt,
wird Armen abgerissen.

Sind ja noch welche, die der Schmerz
der armen Leut beweget,

Notes

in deren Busen noch ein Herz
voll Mitgeföhle schläget.

die müssen von der Zeit verdrängt,
auch in das Gleis einlenken,
der andern Beispiel eingedenk
sich in dem Lohn einschränken.

Ich sage, wem ists wohl bekannt,
wer sah vor zwanzig Jahren,
den übermütgen Fabrikant
in Staatskarossen fahren?

Sah man dort wohl zu jeder Zeit
Paläste hoch erbauen?

Mit Türen, Fenstern, prächtig weit,
ists festlich anzuschauen!

Wer traf wohl dort Hauslehrer an
bei einem Fabrikanten?

In Livreen Kutscher angetan,
Staats-Domestiken, Gouvernanten?

PAGE 117

From darkened eyes . . . From the translation by Louis Untermeyer, the only successful rendering of this poem in English. It is interesting to note that the first foreign version of this poem appeared in Robert Owen's periodical, *The New Moral World*, on December 14, 1844, within a few weeks after its first publication in German. The translator was Friedrich Engels. The German original is as follows:

Im düstern Auge keine Träne,
Sie sitzen am Webstuhl und fletschen die Zähne:
"Deutschland, wir weben dein Leichentuch,
Wir weben hinein den dreifachen Fluch—
Wir weben, wir weben!

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

“Ein Fluch dem Gotte, zu dem wir gebeten
In Winterskälte und Hungersnöten;
Wir haben vergebens gehofft und geharrt—
Er hat uns geäfft und gefoppt und genarrt—
Wir weben, wir weben!

“Ein Fluch dem König, dem König der Reichen,
Den unser Elend nicht konnte erweichen,
Der den letzten Groschen von uns erpresst,
Und uns wie Hunde erschossen lässt—
Wir weben, wir weben!

“Ein Fluch dem falschen Vaterlande,
Wo nur gedeihen Schmach und Schande,
Wo jede Blume früh geknickt,
Wo Fäulnis und Moder den Wurm erquickt—
Wir weben, wir weben!

“Das Schiffchen fliegt, der Webstuhl kracht,
Wir weben emsig Tag und Nacht—
Altdeutschland, wir weben dein Leichentuch,
Wir weben hinein den dreifachen Fluch,
Wir weben, wir weben!”

CHAPTER VIII

PAGE 126

In Geibel's poem . . . Emanuel Geibel, *Werke*, 3 ed., Stuttgart, 1893, II, 91.

PAGE 127

Semmig's poem . . . is preserved among his literary remains that still await publication. As a characteristic illustration of the social poetry of the Forties, it is here reprinted in full, with the permission of Jeanne Berta Semmig, the daughter of the poet.

Notes

MENE! MENE!

1847

Allnächtlich wohl bei reichen Festen
Schwelgt ihr bei duftend süßem Mahl,
Es wird in euern Prunkpalästen
Nie Nacht vor stolzem Kerzenstrahl;
In geiler Weiber feilem Arme
Durchtobt ihr wüst die Nacht und zecht
Und übertäubt in frechem Schwarme
Des Armen Schrei nach Brot und Recht.
Da seht! da reckt sich eine Hand
Und schreibt gespenstisch an die Wand
Und starr vor Schreck im tollsten Prassen
Müsst ihr es sehn und müsst erblassen:
Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin!

Kennt ihr die Hand? Sie ist mein eigen;
Sie wird nicht müde, Wird nicht matt,
Zu schreiben jene Schreckenszeichen
Auf jede Wand, auf jedes Blatt.

Ihr sollt erzittern und verzagen
Und mögt ihr fliehn in irrer Hast,
Von eures Fluches Sturm getragen
Folgt euch der Rächer ohne Rast.
Auf banger Flucht, im müden Schlaf,
Ich schreck euch auf, wo ich euch traf;
Es wird die Hand den Griffel fassen,
Ihr sollt es sehn und sollt erblassen:
Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin!

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

Ich weiss es wohl, ich kann nur schreiben,
Ich führ' den Griffel, ihr das Schwert;
Ihr könnt mich armen Mann vertreiben,
Gleich einem Wild, von jedem Herd.
Doch wisst, geflügelt ist die Rache,
Vom Adler hat sie ihren Blick
Und schlägt ihr auf des Sieges Lache,
Fällt sie euch plötzlich ins Genick.
 Und legt ihr mich und meine Hand
 In Ketten, an des Kerkers Wand
 Noch schreib' ich fort und kann's nicht lassen,
 Ihr sollt es sehn und sollt erblassen:
 Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin!

Einst aber wird das Mass gewogen
Und eurer Schulden Zahl gezählt,
Schon braust empört in wilden Wogen
Das Volk, das seine Richter wählt.
Dann werdet ihr zu leicht befunden,
Dann wird mein Fluch zum Richterspruch,
Und mit dem Blute eurer Wunden
Schreibt man der Weltgeschichte Buch.
 Dann wirft die Hand den Griffel fort,
 Die stumme Schrift wird lautes Wort
 Und alles Volk ruft auf den Gassen,
 Ihr sollt es hören und erblassen:
 Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin!

PAGE 127

Georg Weerth . . . "Lieder aus Lancashire," *Gesellschafts-
spiegel*, edited by Moses Hess, Elberfeld, 1845; also
"Gebet eines Irländers," *Gesellschaftsspiegel*, Vol. II, 1846.
[178]

Notes

PAGE 128

Jeremias Gotthelf . . . *Werke*, Bern, 1899, VII, 13.

PAGE 129

Wilhelm Weitling . . . *Garantien der Harmonie und der Freiheit*, 1842, p. 57.

PAGE 130

Hebbel . . . For Hebbel's attitude towards the problems of the proletariat, see Heinrich Steves, *Friedrich Hebbels Verhältnis zu den politischen und sozialen Fragen*, Greifswald, 1909.

PAGE 133

anonymous author . . . *Renegaten und Communisten-Lieder*, Dresden, 1844.

Album of Original Poetry . . . *Album—Originalpoesieen*, edited by Hermann Püttmann, Herisau, 1847. The second edition in 1851 was entitled *Sozialistisches Liederbuch*. The outstanding contributions are those of Heine who until the last moment of his life wrote social lyrics of amazing insight and unrivalled beauty. From his mattress-grave in Paris the poet continued his attacks upon a society that seemed cruelly indifferent to the suffering of its humble members. In bitter scorn he lashes the social hypocrisy of his day in a poem, published after his death, entitled "Jammertal."

Der Nachtwind durch die Luken pfeift,
Und auf dem Dachstublager
Zwei arme Seelen gebettet sind;
Sie schauen so blass und mager.

Die eine arme Seele spricht:
"Umschling' mich mit deinen Armen,
An meinen Mund drück' fest deinen Mund,
Ich will an dir erwärmen."

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

Die andere arme Seele spricht:
"Wenn ich dein Auge sehe,
Verschwindet mein Elend, der Hunger, der Frost
Und all mein Erdenwehe."

Sie küssten sich viel, sie weinten noch mehr,
Sie drückten sich seufzend die Hände,
Sie lachten manchmal und sangen sogar,
Und sie verstummten am Ende.

Am Morgen kam der Kommissär,
Und mit ihm kam ein braver
Chirurgus, welcher konstatiert
Den Tod der beiden Kadaver.

Die strenge Witt'ung, erklärte er,
Mit Magenleere vereinigt,
Hat beider Ableben verursacht, sie hat
Zum mindestens solches beschleunigt.

Wenn Fröste eintreten, setzt' er hinzu,
Sei höchst notwendig Verwahrung
Durch wollene Decken; er empfahl
Gleichfalls gesunde Nahrung.

PAGE 134

Gustav Mayer . . . *Friedrich Engels*, Vol. I, Berlin, 1920,
p. 273.

CHAPTER IX

PAGE 147

If you've much . . . from the translation by Margaret Armour in *Heine's Works*, New York, 1906, XI, 236. The German version is as follows:

[180]

Notes

WELTLAUF

Hat man viel, so wird man bald
Noch viel mehr dazu bekommen.
Wer nur wenig hat, dem wird
Auch das Wenige genommen.
Wenn du aber gar nichts hast,
Ach, so lasse dich begraben—
Denn ein Recht zum Leben, Lump,
Haben nur die etwas haben.

PAGE 150

The Roving Rats . . . from the translation by Margaret Armour, in *Heine's Works*, New York, 1906, XII, 127–129. The German version, entitled “Die Wanderratten,” is as follows:

Es gibt zwei Sorten Ratten:
Die hungrigen und die sattten.
Die sattten bleiben vergnügt zu Haus.
Die hungrigen aber wandern aus.
Sie wandern viel tausend Meilen,
Ganz ohne Rasten und Weilen,
Gradaus in ihrem grimmigen Lauf,
Nicht Wind noch Wetter hält sie auf.
Sie klimmen wohl über die Höhen,
Sie schwimmen wohl durch die Seen;
Gar manche ersäuft oder bricht das Genick,
Die lebenden lassen die toten zurück.
Es haben diese Käuze
Gar fürchterliche Schnäuze;
Sie tragen die Köpfe geschoren egal,
Ganz radikal, ganz rattenkahl.

Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany

Die radikale Rotte
Weiss nichts von einem Gotte.
Sie lassen nicht taufen ihre Brut,
Die Weiber sind Gemeindegut.

Der sinnliche Rattenhaufen,
Er will nur fressen und saufen,
Er denkt nicht, während er säuft und frisst,
Dass unsre Seele unsterblich ist.

So eine wilde Ratze,
Die fürchtet nicht Hölle, nicht Katze;
Sie hat kein Gut, sie hat kein Geld
Und wünscht aufs neue zu teilen die Welt.

Die Wanderratten, o wehe!
Sie sind schon in der Nähe.
Sie rücken heran, ich höre schon
Ihr Pfeifen, die Zahl ist Legion.

O wehe! wir sind verloren,
Sie sind schon vor den Toren!
Der Bürgermeister und Senat,
Sie schütteln die Köpfe, und keiner weiss Rat.

Nicht Glockengeläute, nicht Pfaffengebete,
Nicht hochwohlweise Senatsdekrete,
Auch nicht Kanonen, viel Hundertpfunder,
Sie helfen euch heute, ihr lieben Kinder!

Heut' helfen euch nicht die Wortgespinste
Der abgelebten Redekünste.
Man fängt nicht Ratten mit Syllogismen,
Sie springen über die feinsten Sophismen.

INDEX

INDEX

Adler, Georg, 43.
 Arnim, Bettina von, 50-53.
 Aston, Louise, 12, 121.
 Bazard, 90.
 Beck, Karl, 14, 29, 40-49, 62f.,
 94, 121, 134, 155, 160.
 Béranger, 24, 55, 90.
 Bodenstedt, Friedrich, 156.
 Brentano, Klemens, 8, 14.
 Büchner, Georg, 6, 18.
 Buchner, Karl, 137.
 Bülow, Hans von, 61.
 Bulwer-Lytton, 10.
 Bürger, Gottfried August, 16, 22.
 Burns, Robert, 142.
 Byron, Lord, 35, 37-40, 48.
 Chamisso, Adalbert von, 16-34,
 55.
 Chevalier, Michel, 90.
 Dante, 153.
 Dickens, Charles, 10f.
 Dingelstedt, Franz, 3, 70.
 Disraeli, Benjamin, 10.
 Dostoyevsky, Feodor, 159.
 Dronke, Ernst, 12, 14, 70-72, 120,
 134, 155.
 Eichendorff, Joseph Freiherr von,
 8, 14, 16.

Elliott, Ebenezer, 54.
 Enfantin, Prosper, 77, 79, 90f.
 Engels, Friedrich, 40, 71, 88f.,
 119, 123, 134f., 144.
 Feuerbach, Ludwig, 76, 130.
 Fichte, Johann Gottlieb, 124.
 Fourier, François, 60, 90, 123.
 Frederick William III, 17, 97.
 Frederick William IV, 2, 53,
 57f., 97, 137.
 Freiligrath, Ferdinand, 3, 13, 21,
 39f., 55, 114-116, 119, 134-146,
 155, 159f.
 Freytag, Gustav, 33, 66f., 114,
 158.
 Fugger, 43f.
 Gaskell, Elizabeth C., 10.
 Gaudy, Franz von, 55.
 Geibel, Emanuel, 126f., 156f.
 Goethe, 7, 9, 40, 48, 160.
 Gotthelf, Jeremias, 128.
 Gottschall, Rudolph von, 89.
 Gregorovius, Ferdinand, 8.
 Grillparzer, Franz, 26f.
 Grosse, Julius, 156.
 Grün, Anastasius, 29, 121.
 Grün, Karl, 7.
 Gutzkow, Karl, 17, 40.

Index

- Hardenberg, Fürst, 25.
Hartmann, Moritz, 47, 89, 134, 155.
Hauff, Wilhelm, 44.
Hauptmann, Gerhart, 13, 96, 101, 122, 143.
Hebbel, Friedrich, 130-133.
Hegel, G. W. F., 83, 124, 131.
Heine, Heinrich, 13, 17, 21, 31f., 37, 39, 74f., 79-94, 114, 116-18, 135, 146-155, 159f.
Heinzen, Karl, 137.
Henckell, Karl, 13.
Herrig, Ludwig, 89.
Herwegh, Georg, 3, 14, 40, 55-63, 115, 125, 155, 159f.
Heyse, Paul, 156.
Hitzig, Julius Eduard, 25.
Hoffmann von Fallersleben, 3, 113f.
Hood, Thomas, 54.
Hübner, Karl, 102-105.
Humboldt, Alexander von, 40.

Ibsen, Henrik, 159.
Immermann, Karl, 9f.

Kauffer, Eduard, 121.
Keller, Gottfried, 30f., 128.
Kerner, Justinus, 27f., 30.
Kingsley, Charles, 10.
Klinger, Max, 5f.
Köhler, Ludwig, 47, 69f., 121.

Lassalle, Ferdinand, 61.
Laube, Heinrich, 9.
Lenau, Nikolaus, 27.
Lenz, Reinhold, 6.
Lingg, Hermann, 156.

Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, 141.
Lüning, H. O., 29f., 134.

Malthus, T. R., 122.
Martineau, Harriet, 10.
Marx, Karl, 7, 60, 71, 123, 135, 137, 139, 144f., 154.
Mayer, Gustav, 134.
Mehring, Franz, 94.
Meissner, Alfred, 13f., 65, 70, 89f., 94, 125f., 134, 155.
Merckel, 99.
Metternich, 13, 90.
Minckwitz, Johannes, 27.
Müller, Wolfgang, 54.

Napoleon I, 84, 110.
Nathusius, Philipp, 55.
Neuhaus, Gustav Reinhard, 121.
Novalis, 14, 17, 156.

Oelckers, Th., 12.
Otto, Louise, 12, 30, 73, 121, 134.
Owen, Robert, 135.

Pfau, Ludwig, 118f.
Preuss, Hugo, 143.
Pröhle, Heinrich, 121.
Proudhon, Pierre J., 6, 123.
Prutz, Robert, 11, 73, 122.
Püttmann, Hermann, 47, 54, 68, 120, 133f.

Rahel Varnhagen, 90.
Rathenau, Walter, 143.
Redwitz, Oskar von, 156.
Ricardo, David, 122.
Rodrigues, Olinde, 90.

Index

- Roquette, Otto, 156.
Rothschild, 26, 43, 131.
Rousseau, J. J., 37f.
Ruge, Arnold, 40, 60, 130.
Ruppius, Otto, 12.
- Schack, Graf von, 156.
Scheffel, Josef Viktor von, 156.
Scherenberg, Christian Friedrich, 27f.
Schiller, 6, 40, 48, 58, 160.
Schirmer, Adolf, 121.
Schlegel, August Wilhelm, 82.
Schlegel, Friedrich, 17.
Schloenbach, C. A., 12, 89.
Schneer, Alexander, 98f.
Schults, Adolf, 54, 120.
Seeger, Ludwig, 55.
Semmig, Herman, 126f., 134.
Seybt, Julius, 89.
Shelley, P. B., 37, 39, 89.
Sinclair, Upton, 62.
Stein, Freiherr von, 25.
Stein, Lorenz von, 123.
Stinnes, Hugo, 143.
Stirner, Max, 123.
Strauss, David Friedrich, 76.
- Stresemann, Gustav, 143.
St. Simon, 18, 39, 77-80, 88, 90f.,
94, 123, 146.
Sue, Eugène, 11, 65.
- Tieck, Ludwig, 8, 17, 156.
Toller, Ernst, 13.
Tolstoy, Leo, 159.
- Uhland, Ludwig, 21.
Ullrich, Titus, 121.
Ungern-Sternberg, Alexander
von, 11.
Untermeyer, Louis, 74.
- Varnhagen von Ense, 40, 112.
Voss, Johann Heinrich, 16, 22.
- Walzel, Oskar, 17.
Wassermann, Jakob, 13.
Weerth, Georg, 68, 94, 119f.,
127, 155.
Weitling, Wilhelm, 59, 123, 129.
Whitman, Walt, 145.
Willbomm, Ernst, 11, 73, 122.
- Zimmermann, Wilhelm, 89.
Zola, Emile, 159.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
NEW YORK

FOREIGN AGENT
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
HUMPHREY MILFORD
AMEN HOUSE, LONDON, E. C.

831.09 Date Due L669

36717

831.09
L669

L 669

PELLETIER LIBRARY, ALLEGHENY COLLEGE

PELETIER LIBRARY, ALLEGHENY COLLEGE
WITHDRAWN

3 3768 00624 0694

